

Theory and Practice of Yoga

Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson

Edited by

Knut A. Jacobsen



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Theory and Practice of Yoga

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Gerald James Larson

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In this book we have followed the standard system of transliterating Sanskrit. However, in the scholarly tradition this standard system allows for some variety in words chosen to be transliterated and words anglicised. Some transliterate modern names of places and persons, other use anglicised forms. Transliterated M. K. Gandhi, Maharashtra and Allahabad read M. K. Gāndhī, Mahārāṣṭra and Allāhābād. Some other words such as Shiva and Krishna have become part of the English language, but many still prefer to write Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. A few words such as Śaṃkara have two different accepted spellings (Śaṃkara and Śaṅkara). The editor has therefore in this matter allowed for some variety among the contributors.

INTRODUCTION: YOGA TRADITIONS

Knut A. Jacobsen

In Honour of Gerald James Larson

The essays of this book have been written by students and close associates of Gerald James Larson, an internationally acclaimed scholar of the history of religions and the philosophies of India, and one of the world's foremost authorities on the Sāṃkhya and Yoga traditions. Larson combines the high standards of indological rigorous scholarship with the creative and innovative thinking characteristic of the best work in Religious Studies. This *estschrift* honours him as a teacher and a scholar. As professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (1970–1995), and as Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Indian Cultures and Civilizations and director of the India Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington (1995–2003), Larson trained a number of graduate students in Indian philosophy and the religions and languages of India. Most of them have become university professors and have made significant contributions to the study of the religions and cultures of India. Larson conveyed to his students his enthusiasm and high standards for scholarship, which became the ideals they tried to emulate and an inspiration to excellence.

Larson has contributed considerably to the historical and philosophical understanding of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religious thought. He has made the philosophy of Sāṃkhya and Yoga available to scholars not only in North America, but in Europe and India as well, through teaching, through books (*Classical Sāṃkhya* and *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy* co-edited with Ram Shankar Bhattacharya), articles, and work on the texts of the Yoga traditions. Larson's interpretation of Indian philosophy has strongly influenced all his students, also his view that the classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religious thought have to be taken seriously as a basis for contemporary constructions of philosophy. Larson always emphasises that with respect to a text of the Indian religious and philosophical traditions one must ask two questions: What did the

text mean then? And what does the text mean now? He also strongly advocates the application of insights from ancient India to engage contemporary issues in theology, philosophy and science.

Larson encouraged his graduate students to learn Indian languages, especially Sanskrit and Hindi. He trained his students in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy and to work closely with texts. High academic standard characterised his classes. The demands and challenges, but also the magical atmosphere, of the Sanskrit classes are unforgettable. Larson also advocated the study of contemporary traditions of philosophical and textual interpretations in India through field study. He travelled regularly to India and stayed several years in Varanasi (Benares), first as Post-Doctoral Research Scholar in the College of Indology, Banaras Hindu University (1968–69) and later as Honorary Visiting Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University (1976–77). It became natural to many of his graduate students themselves to make that scholarly journey to Varanasi. In Varanasi Larson worked closely with another Sāṃkhya-Yoga scholar, Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, who then became an important contact also for Larson's students. I had the privilege to discuss many points of Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy and read Sanskrit text with Bhattacharya during my stays in Varanasi.

Sāṃkhya influenced a large number of Indian systems of knowledge. Its influence is so strong that it has been claimed (by Gopinath Kaviraj in conversation with Larson) that Sāṃkhya is not just one of India's philosophical systems, but is *the* philosophy of India.¹ Larson has contributed also to the study of several of the traditions most strongly influenced by Sāṃkhya-Yoga such as Kashmir Śaivism and the Indian systems of medicine. This wider interest is reflected in the content of this book. While many of the essays are about Sāṃkhya-Yoga, three essays are about yoga in Kashmir Śaivism, many are about yoga in medieval and modern India, and one essay is about Indian traditions of interpretation of the body. Larson has also contributed to the understanding of the Indian traditions of visual art and one essay is devoted to this topic.

Larson emphasises critical scholarship. But yoga is not only a scholarly enterprise: indeed it has become a global phenomenon attract-

¹ Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, vol. iv (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

ing millions. The modern phenomenon of yoga is a function of innovation and transformation as well as the global religious market. In addition, the strong dominance of Vedānta in modern India, especially among those whose interest in meditation is combined with some fluency in the English language, has often led to interpretations of Yoga as a form of Vedānta, and identification of yoga with the Vedāntic goal of union. Larson trained his students in the classical traditions as a solid basis for investigating a whole array of traditions including the modern transformations of yoga. One of the main tasks of the academic study of yoga is to look beyond the presentations of the yoga traditions coloured by contemporary Western systems of physical training, health and healing and the Neo-Vedāntic environment and instead evaluate yoga as a historical and pluralistic phenomenon flourishing in a variety of religious and philosophical contexts. The essays of this book contribute to this task.

The following introduction has two aims. First it attempts to give an introduction to some of the classical traditions of yoga, and second it strives to place the essays that follow in the wider context of the yoga tradition. Yoga has been understood, incorporated and practised in multiple ways in the South Asian environment. It has been fashioned by different persons and groups and has been adopted by schools of thought with strikingly divergent philosophical and religious views. New religious formations that arose in India, such as the Tantric traditions, gave new interpretations of the yoga techniques, added new methods of meditation, and offered new theories of the body, understandings of the goals of yoga and interpretations of the *samādhi* experience. Yoga is part of all the major religions that originated in South Asia including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and it has been adopted by individuals in Islam and Christianity. Although the essays in this book focus primarily on yoga in the Hindu tradition, they strive nevertheless to present yoga in a multiplicity of religious contexts.

Theory and Practice of Yoga

Meaning of the Term Yoga

In his lectures and seminars, Larson repeatedly stated that, in its classical form, yoga does not mean union. In fact, the word ‘yoga’

has a number of meanings. The word ‘yoga’ refers both to traditions of mental and physical discipline and the goal to be achieved by those disciplines. Thus, the most important yoga text, the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali (400–500 C.E.), defines yoga as ‘the cessation of the transformation of awareness,’ *yogaś cittavṛttinirodhaḥ* (*Yogasūtra* 1.2). This state is called concentration (*śamādhi*) and is the goal of most pre-modern and many contemporary yoga traditions. According to the yoga traditions, when the transformation of awareness ceases, the real identity of the human being is realised. Yoga traditions therefore involve distinct interpretations of the purpose and goal of human life and techniques for fulfilling that purpose.

When *Yogasūtra* states that the meaning of yoga is *cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*, it means that yoga refers to a dualistic truth, the realisation of the total separateness of the principle of consciousness, *puruṣa*, from the material principle, *prakṛti*. Yoga as the goal of practice in this text means separation, isolation and concentration, not union. Nevertheless, the view that yoga means union is widespread in contemporary Hinduism as well as in the global yoga community. Yoga has five principal meanings:

- 1) yoga as a disciplined method for attaining a goal;
- 2) yoga as techniques of controlling the body and the mind;
- 3) yoga as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (*darśana*);
- 4) yoga in combination with other words such as *haṭha*-, *mantra*- and *laya*-, referring to traditions specialising in particular techniques of yoga;
- 5) yoga as the goal of yoga practice.

A controversy about the goal of yoga arises only with reference to the last meaning. Only in the last sense could yoga possibly mean union. But since Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* is a text of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, a dualistic system of religious thought, this is not possible unless the text is removed completely from its Sāṃkhya environment.

Outside of classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga traditions, the word ‘yoga’ is common in Sanskrit texts and has many different meanings.² In addi-

² ‘Yoga’ therefore does not always refer to traditions of disciplining of the body and mind. In addition to ‘strenuous effort for the purpose of attaining a difficult goal,’ ‘yoga’ has meanings such as ‘fastening,’ ‘yoking,’ ‘fixing,’ ‘application,’ ‘means,’

tion, even in the context of philosophical systems, the word ‘yoga’ does not always refer to the system of philosophy called Yoga (the Yoga system that has Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* as its foundation text). For instance, Kauṭilya, in *Arthaśāstra* 1.2.10, mentions three varieties of philosophy (*ānvīkṣikā*): Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Lokāyata (*sāṃkhyam yogo lokāyataṃ cety ānvīkṣikā*). The term yoga here does not, perhaps, refer to the philosophical school of Yoga, as has often been assumed, but to logic, that is, the science of reasoning (*yukti*).³ The word yoga was used also later occasionally to refer to the philosophical schools Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika.⁴

Yoga Before the Yogasūtra

The Origins of Yoga

Some scholars have found what they believe to be references to yoga and yogins in the Indus civilisation and the early Vedic religious traditions. They refer to the presence of seals of persons in yogic postures, that is, persons sitting in cross-legged posture with the palms on the knees and seals of Śiva as Paśupati and Mahāyogin, in the Indus civilisation. (See the chapter by Ramdas Lamb in this volume.) As long as there is no agreement on the interpretation of the written sources from the Indus civilisation, such claims about the presence of yoga will remain possible interpretations.

Yoga is made up of many elements, some of which most probably have separate origins. Mental concentration attains salvific functions in the Upaniṣads, but clearly has more ancient roots, possibly connected also to Vedic sacrifice. An important element in yoga traditions emphasising bodily postures is the regulation of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*). However, in early Vedic literature ‘hardly any trace can be found of the importance later attaching to elaborate regulations

‘appliance,’ ‘remedy,’ ‘property,’ and ‘contact with.’ It has also different technical meanings in different systems of knowledge such as ‘the connection of a word with its root’ in grammar, and so on.

³ Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 77.

⁴ Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 278.

of the breath'.⁵ Holding the breath attained a ritual role in the *Brāhmaṇa*-texts.⁶ The mention of breaths and vital energies in the *Atharvaveda* 15.15.1–2 may be references to yoga. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.13.1–6 refers to five kinds of air in the body (*prāṇa*, *vyāna*, *apāna*, *samāna* and *udāna*) which are identified with five directions (including the four cardinal directions and the upward direction) and equated with the physical form of the self (*ātman*). The internal sound of the body, central to many forms of yoga, is also mentioned in this text. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.6.6., refers to 101 veins (*nāḍī*-s). The text describes one of these as going to the crown of the head, and claims that by ascending it, one reaches the immortal. The breaths and veins are given a yogic interpretation in the *Praśna Upaniṣad* 1.3.3–12. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, and the late *Upaniṣads*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Maitrī*, there are descriptions of practices of yoga that the texts themselves identify as yoga.

Bodily postures are closely related to the tradition of *tapas*, ascetic practices in the Vedic tradition. The use by Vedic priests of ascetic practices in their preparations for the performance of the sacrifice might be precursors to yoga.⁷ However, the ecstatic practice of the enigmatic longhaired *muni* in *Rgveda* 10.136 and the ascetic performance of the *vrātya*-s in the *Atharvaveda* outside of or on the fringe of the Brāhmaṇical ritual order, have probably contributed more to the ascetic practices of yoga. The *vrātya*-s are described as performing austerities (*tapas*) such as standing upright for a year. Such emphasis on bodily postures is probably a precursor to the *āsana*-s of yoga.

The performance of austerities was thought to give the practitioner immense powers and even to force the gods to grant boons. The reward of such powers is an important part of yoga as well. There are two sides to yoga: appropriation of knowledge and appropriation of power. Yoga leads not only to control of oneself, but also to control of the world. Possession of supernormal powers characterise the greatest yogins of *Mahābhārata* such as Vyāsa's son Śuka and the famous Jaigīśavya, and a large part of the *Yogasūtra* is devoted

⁵ Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads* (1923; reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 401.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. 2nd. rev. ed., translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 108.

⁷ David M. Knipe, *In the Image of Fire: Vedic Experiences of Heat* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975).

to this topic. (See the chapter by Lloyd Pflieger in this volume.) The traditional commentaries of classical yoga denies that attaining such powers is the goal of yoga, describing them instead as simply signs that certain yoga practices have been perfected and warning that they can distract from the ultimate salvific goal of yoga. In the later developments of yoga incorporated in Tantra, both knowledge and power were accepted as goals. (See the chapter by Jeffrey Lidke in this volume.) Traditions of *tapas* and yoga seem to have blended throughout the history of the yoga traditions.

Interestingly, when practices identified by the texts themselves as yoga appear in the written sources (in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*), they seem to belong to a different world-view than the early Vedic religion. The early Vedic tradition did not include belief in *karma*, *saṃsāra*, *punarbhava* and *mokṣa*. It has been suggested that the distinction between *tapas* and yoga might correspond to the distinction between the Vedic or *brāhmaṇa* ascetics on the one hand and non-Vedic or *śramaṇa* ascetics on the other and their contrasting traditions of asceticism.⁸ This is an interesting suggestion, but it probably simplifies the situation too much, since it appears that many groups and traditions have contributed to the development of yoga.

The ultimate goal according to the early yoga traditions was stillness and the realisation of an eternal, unchanging principle. This implied both the minimalisation of contact with other human beings and the stopping of the operation of the sense organs and mental organs. In that stillness, an inner permanent and immovable reality not available through the senses and normal awareness was realised. The realisation of this reality caused freedom and liberation from rebirth (*mokṣa*). Yoga schools have understood the ultimate goal of yoga differently.

Yoga in the Upaniṣads

Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* contain many Sāṃkhya notions and terminology and Sāṃkhya-like speculations. The appearance of yoga in the *Upaniṣads* coincides, in other words, with the appearance of the Sāṃkhya intellectual environment in the

⁸ Bronkhorst, Johannes, *The two sources of Indian asceticism*, Schweizer Asiatische Studien, Monographien, vol. 13 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1993).

texts. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3.10–11, a meditation scheme describing a hierarchy of states is identified using Sāṃkhya terminology. The term yoga is also used in 6.10–11 describing control of the senses as yoga. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.12 uses the word *adhyātma-yoga*, discipline with respect to the self. The yogin, it is said, withdraws to a hidden place, sits down in secret, and abandons both joy and grief. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3.3–6, yoga is compared to a chariot in which the self rides. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, another text promoting Sāṃkhya terminology, describes the relationship between thought and breath, control of the mind, manifestation of *brahman* and the attainment of a body free from sickness, old age and suffering, and other results of yoga practice. Yoga is here described as keeping the body with the three upper parts erect, causing the senses and the mind to enter the heart, repressing the breath, controlling all movements, and breathing through the nostrils. When the breath is exhausted, the practitioner should restrain his mind as ‘he would a chariot yoked with unruly horses’ (2.9). One should undertake this yoga practice in a place that is hidden, protected from the wind, level, clean, free from pebbles, fire and sand, and near silent running water, which is favourable to the mind and not offensive to the eye.

The *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, another text that contains Sāṃkhya notions and speculations, presents a six-fold form of yoga (6.18) that comprises breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna*), fixation of thought (*dhāraṇā*), contemplation (*tarka*) and concentration (*samādhi*). It is notable that the *āsana*-s, which are of such central importance in the later yoga traditions, are missing from this list. Nor is *tapas* mentioned. Control of the breath and the mind constitute this yoga. Ethical restraints and recommended practices (*yama* and *niyama*) are also missing in the list, perhaps because they were seen as practices belonging to *dharma* in general, and were not peculiar to yoga.

Yoga in the Mahābhārata

In the *Mahābhārata*, there is little mention of yoga in any of the books prior to the *Śāntiparvan*, with the exception of the *Bhagavadgītā* and some stories found in some of the books about yogins.⁹ The

⁹ E. Washburn Hopkins, ‘Yoga-technique in the Great Epic,’ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901): 333–379.

philosophy of yoga is found mainly in the narratives and dialogues of the *Śāntiparvan*.¹⁰ In the *Mahābhārata* the term ‘yoga’ is used both in the sense of discipline and in the specialised sense of the techniques called yoga. As a technique of controlling the mind, yoga in the *Mahābhārata* is often associated with Sāṃkhya. Through yoga one’s vision is turned inwards, and the self is known to be separate from the mind and body. In the *Mahābhārata* 12.232, Vyāsa advises that the yogin should withdraw the senses and the mind, and find an empty cave in the mountain. There he should not associate with others by speech, acts or thought. He should be unattached to things and behave equally to those who praise or condemn him (12.232.25–27).

In the *Mahābhārata*, the goal of yoga practice is variously described as knowledge of the separation of the self from matter, as entering the world of Brahmā (12.192.20), as *brahman* (12.228.38), as perceiving *brahman* or the *ātman* that pervades all things (12.231.17–18), and so forth. The yogin is described by Vasiṣṭha in *Mahābhārata*, 12.294.15–25 as one who does not hear, smell, taste, see, or feel touch. His mind knows no purpose: he has no sense of ‘I’ and does not think. He is described as motionless like a log of wood and a flame burning in a place without wind. In that state he realises ‘the knower’ that is beyond words and is the inner self existing in the heart. This inner self is like a fire without smoke, like the sun and the lightening in the sky. The meaning of yoga is then stated: it is to perceive the perceiver, the self that is without decay and is the highest.

The goals of Sāṃkhya and Yoga are often said to be the same: that which the yogins see, is the same as is understood by the Sāṃkhyans. He is wise who sees Sāṃkhya and Yoga as one (*yad eva yogāḥ paśyanti sām̐khyais tad anugaṃyate, ekaṃ sām̐khyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa buddhimān*) (12.293.30). Śiva is the Hindu god most often associated with yoga in the popular imagination. In the *Bhagavadgītā* chapters of the *Mahābhārata*, however, Kṛṣṇa is called the Lord of yoga, *yogeśvara* (18.75) (see the chapter by Tracy Pintchman in this volume).

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, yoga is understood on the one hand as a method of disinterested activity while remaining in the world, and

¹⁰ Ibid.

on the other, in the technical sense, as a set of mental and bodily exercises to be performed in a solitary place for the attainment of higher levels of awareness. Mokṣa is attainable by both forms of yoga. Yoga in this text means a way to salvation. *Bhagavadgītā* distinguishes between knowledge-yoga (*jñāna-yoga*), action-yoga (*karma-yoga*) and devotion-yoga (*bhakti-yoga*). In addition the *Bhagavadgītā* describes a yoga of mental exercise while sitting in a solitary place. The technical form of yoga is described here as controlling the mind by withdrawing the senses from the objects of the senses, restraining its activities and controlling the transformations of awareness:

A yogin should always discipline himself staying in a solitary place, alone, restraining his body and mind, free from expectations and without possessions (6.10).

Establishing in a clean place a steady seat for himself that is neither too high nor too low, covered with a cloth, a skin, and *kuśa*-grass (6.11).

Sitting on the seat, he should practice yoga for the purification of the mind, fixing the mind on a single object, restraining the activity of his mind and senses (6.12).

Erect body, head and neck, holding himself motionless and steady, looking at the tip of his own nose and not looking in any direction (6.13).

He should gradually come to rest through the intellect, held with firmness, keeping the mind fixed in the self, he should think on nothing at all (6.25).

This description of a person performing technical yoga is reminiscent of the description in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. But the *Bhagavadgītā* offers also the unique understanding of yoga as participation in the normal activity in the world while restraining the mind. Yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā* is ‘a method of unselfish or disciplined activity, with indifference to results,’¹¹ that is, the method of salvation characterised by participation in action without interest in the fruits of action. *Jñāna-yoga* in the *Bhagavadgītā* (2.11–2.38) means knowledge of the immortal and indestructible self as separate from and independent

¹¹ Franklin Edgerton, ‘The Meaning of Sāṅkhya and Yoga,’ *Journal of Philology*, vol. xlv (1929), 1–46; quote from, p. 4; see also Franklin Edgerton, ‘The Upaniṣads: What They seek and Why?’ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 49, no. 2 (1929): 97–121.

of the body. The self is eternal, omnipresent, immovable and changeless, it is not hurt, therefore, when the body is hurt, and it does not die when the body dies. This view of the self and the yogic human qualities that follows from it, such as being the same with respect to happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, is used to convince Arjuna that he can act without the self being involved. *Karma*-yoga, means performing the duties according to one's *varṇa* identity without attachment to the fruits of action. He who performs action without attachment is called 'established in yoga' (*yogastha*) (2.48) and yoga is defined as equanimity (*samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*) (2.48) and skill in action (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*) (2.50). Such a person is a *sthitaprajña*: he is free from attachment, anger, and fear. He neither welcomes nor rejects whatever comes, good or bad, and withdraws the senses from the objects of the senses like a tortoise withdraws its limbs. Attachment leads to anger, delusion, forgetfulness, and loss of the intellect, but control of the self leads to serenity, the eradication of sorrow, and *brahmanirvāṇa*, that *nirvāṇa* which is *brahman*. The text thereafter argues against the possibility of non-action. This seems to be an attempt to appropriate yoga in order to undermine it as an ascetic practice of disciplined meditation outside of society.

Bhakti-yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā* means the performance of action for the sake of Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu without attachment to the fruits of action, but also devotion and worship of him both in the *avatāra* form and as ultimate reality (see the essay by Tracy Pintchman in this volume). The text as a whole defends *bhakti*-yoga as the supreme yoga. In the end, therefore, Kṛṣṇa says: 'Abandon all duties and take refuge in me alone. I shall free you from all evil. Do not grieve!' (*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇam vraja, ahaṃ tvā sarvapaṭhebhya mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*) (18.66). While this *bhakti*-yoga does not involve asceticism and technical yoga, later passages in the *Purāṇas* describe *bhakti* as forms of *tapas* and yoga which is reminiscent of the asceticism typical of Hindu renunciants.¹²

The *Bhagavadgītā*'s claim that salvation is gained by the performance of one's *svadharma* without desire for fruits, was controversial also at the time of its composition. The *Mokṣadharmā* section of the *Śāntiparvan* (12.168–353) argues that the interpretation of the yoga method

¹² Knut A. Jacobsen, 'Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu,' *Orientalia Suecana* vol. 47 (1998): 69–85.

as disinterested activity while remaining in the world, is false.¹³ In the *Mokṣadharmā* yoga means disciplined action, not in the sense of ordinary worldly action (as in the *Bhagavadgītā*) but in the sense of control of behaviour, body and mind in disciplined meditation.

Yoga and Buddhism

In the Upaniṣads and the *Mahābhārata*, yoga is in particular associated with the ideas and terminology of Sāṃkhya. Larson has argued that the systematic Yoga philosophy incorporated a number of theoretical strands, but two were especially important: first, Sāṃkhya ontology and epistemology, and second, Buddhist psychology and meditation-theory.¹⁴ Yoga adopted both vocabulary and schemes from Buddhism.¹⁵ However, Buddhism is, probably, already in its origin

¹³ Hopkins, 'Yoga-technique in the Great Epic'.

¹⁴ Gerald James Larson, 'An Old Problem Revisited: The Relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism,' *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, Heft 15, pp. 129–146. See also Gerald James Larson, 'Classical Yoga as Neo-Sāṃkhya: A Chapter in the History of Indian Philosophy,' *Asiatische Studien Études Asiatiques* LIII, 3 (1999): 723–732.

¹⁵ The concepts of the four noble truths and the eightfold path are reworked in the *Yogasūtra*. The terms cessation (*nīrodha*) and pain (*duḥkha*) belong to the core of the teaching of the *Yogasūtra* as well as the Buddhist tradition. *Sāṃkhyaparavācā* on *Yogasūtra* 2.15 says that for the wise (*vivekin*) everything is unsatisfactory (*duḥkham eva sarvaṃ*). Thereafter follows a statement similar to the four noble truths: The truth of repeated rebirth (*saṃsāra*); the truth of the cause of repeated rebirth (*saṃsārahetu*); the truth of release from rebirth (*mokṣa*); and the truth about the means to release (*mokṣopāya*). This again is followed by the presentation of the eight limbs of yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*). The eight limbs of yoga might have been fashioned after the model of the eightfold path of Buddhism. In the Buddhist eightfold path there is a greater emphasis on conversion, that is, adopting the eightfold path, reflecting the missionary zeal of Buddhism. Control of the body and breath are not mentioned specifically in the Buddhist eightfold path, but they are incorporated into the last part of the path, meditation. The eightfold path of yoga is different from the eightfold path of the Buddha also because it gives more emphasis on the body. The first limb of Patañjali's eightfold yoga (*yama*) is about ethics, the second (*niyama*) places yoga in the Hindu context by recommending some religious practices. The third (*āsana*) and fourth (*prāṇāyāma*) concern the body, while the last four (*prātyahāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*) are about meditation. In *Yogasūtra* 1.33 Patañjali mentions the cultivation of the four attitudes of love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*), and impartiality (*upekṣā*), well known in Buddhism. Ignorance, according to *Yogasūtra* 2.5, is thinking of the impermanent object as everlasting, the impure as pure, misery as happiness, and the not-self as the self. This can be compared to the four wrong attitudes in Buddhism: to hope for something permanent when nothing is permanent, to long for beauty when everything is ugly, to long for permanent gratification of the senses, and to long for a permanent self when there is no permanent self.

influenced by early traditions of yoga. In Buddhist meditation, yogic techniques were given Buddhist interpretations, and the yogic idea of stillness was an important influence on, and a significant ingredient in, the Buddhist conception of *nirvāṇa*.¹⁶ Buddhism produced 'meditation through insight' (*vipaśyanā*), but inherited and incorporated the famous four *dhyāna*-s (Pāli: *jhāna*-s) (trances, absorptions) as well as the supernormal powers (Pāli: *ṛddhi*-s) associated with them, from pre-Buddhist yoga traditions.¹⁷ While they were rejected as in themselves sufficient to reach the highest goal, they were incorporated into Buddhist meditation and cosmological understanding. The *jhāna*-s were correlated with planes of existence. This means that yogic attainments were available both as states of consciousness in this life and as levels of existence after death. This is a common assumption both in Buddhist and non-Buddhist yogic environments. In Sāṃkhya-Yoga, as described in the Epics and the *Purāṇas*, and hinted at in the *Yogasūtra*, the *tattva*-s are looked upon as a hierarchy of yogic achievements. Those who attain *prakṛti*, *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra* and so on in meditation in this life are reborn in the cosmic *prakṛti*, *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra* and so on, and gain freedom from rebirth for a long time, but not permanently. As in the Buddhist cosmological understanding, the higher the principle attained, the longer the stay in that principle lasts.¹⁸ Such micro-macro correlation is characteristic of the yoga traditions and seems to be a development of the Upaniṣadic idea that 'what you know, that you become'.¹⁹

Classical Yoga (Pātañjala Yoga) and Classical Sāṃkhya

The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali is the foundational text of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, but has nevertheless gained prestige as the foundational text of yoga as such. However, Patañjali was not the founder of yoga. That Patañjali used the word *anuśāsana* and not *śāsana* in *sūtra* 1.1. (*atha*

¹⁶ Winston L. King, *Theravāda Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

¹⁹ Franklin Edgerton, 'The Upaniṣads: What They seek and Why?' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 49, no. 2 (1929): 97–121; Franklin Edgerton, *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1965).

yogānuśāsanam) is usually understood to mean that he was not the originator of the system, but that his system was an exposition of a previous revelation. According to some Hindu traditions, the yoga method was first proclaimed by Hiraṇyagarbha. Mādhava in *Sarvadarśana-saṃgraha* quotes the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* in support of this: *hiraṇyagarbho yogasya vaktā nānyaḥ purātanaḥ*. Pātañjala Yoga is one of the two philosophical systems (*darśana*) that are based on the Sāṃkhya philosophy. In the *Mahābhārata*, Kapila and Hiraṇyagarbha are said to have originated two different methods: ‘The promoter of Sāṃkhya is the great sage Kapila, it is said; the promoter of Yoga is the ancient Hiraṇyagarbha and no other’ (*sāṃkhyasya vaktā kapilaḥ paramarṣiḥ sa ucyate, hiraṇyagarbho yogasya vettā nānyaḥ purātanaḥ*) (*Śānti-parvan* 12.337.60).

The primary textual source for Pātañjala-Yoga or Sāṃkhya-Yoga is, in addition to the *Yogasūtra*, the commentary called *Sāṃkhyapravacana*, *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* or *Vyāsabhāṣya*. Patañjali’s collection of *sūtra*-s incorporated several traditions of yoga. Most likely, the intention of the text was not to exhibit the different schools of yoga, but to bring these traditions together and give them a coherent interpretation. This coherent interpretation, i.e., the Yoga system of philosophy, is a form of Sāṃkhya, revised, Larson argues, by the philosopher Vindhyavāsin, and has therefore in common with Sāṃkhya its fundamental features. Larson has argued that

there were two streams of early systematic philosophizing in India, namely the Śaṣṭitantra of Sāṃkhya and the Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika (and possibly other Buddhist traditions as well). In the first centuries of the Common Era, or at least about the time of Vāṛṣyaganya, these two traditions began to interact with one another, and systematic Yoga philosophy is a hybrid form of that interaction probably occasioned by the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu II (ca. 350–450 of the Common Era).²⁰

The Yoga system blends the Sāṃkhya philosophy with the traditions of meditation preserved in the Buddhist traditions in a way that brings notions from the older traditions of meditation such as *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *śamādhi*, *nirōdha* and *śamāpatti*, argues Larson, ‘into a master-

²⁰ Gerald James Larson, ‘An Old Problem Revisited: The Relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism,’ *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, Heft 15 (1989), 129–146; quote from p. 134. See also Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, vol. iv (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

ful synthesis that provides both a theoretical as well as practical account of the old Sāṃkhya discernment of the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.⁷ In other words, classical Yoga combines the vocabulary derived from South Asian traditions of meditation with the technical philosophical terms of Sāṃkhya. Yoga therefore shares with classical Sāṃkhya the belief in the consciousness principle (*puruṣa*) as a passive witness and in its eternal separateness from the material principle and its products such as the mind and the body.

Even though the philosophical systems of Sāṃkhya and Yoga may be regarded as ‘two different modifications of one common system of ideas’ or ‘two schools of philosophy which evolved through the modifications of the original Sāṃkhya school’, there are also important differences. Larson identifies these differences as follows. In Yoga, mind (*manas*), egoity (*ahaṃkāra*), and intellect (*buddhi*) are brought together into a single all-pervasive cognitive faculty called awareness (*citta*). The existence of *īśvara* is admitted. However, *īśvara* is not an additional principle (*tattva*), but only a particular *puruṣa*. Yoga’s phenomenology is developed not around the eight predispositions (*bhāva*-s) and fifty categories (*pratyaya*-s), as in Sāṃkhya, but around the notion of five cognitive conditions (*vytti*-s) of awareness (knowledge, error, conceptual construction, sleep, and memory) that are either afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) or unafflicted (*akliṣṭa*). When they are afflicted they generate latent dispositions (*vāsanā*, *saṃskāra*) and karmic residues (*karmāśāya*), but when they are unafflicted they generate latent dispositions that gradually destroy ignorance and lead to knowledge (*vivekakhyāti*) about the distinction between *puruṣa* and *sattva* (i.e., the *buddhi*, the part of *prakṛti* most similar to *puruṣa*). While Sāṃkhya advocates knowledge of the *tattva*-s as the way to salvation, Yoga prescribes a series of ethical restraints, religious practices and physical and mental training. In her essay in this book, T. S. Rukmani, shows that Sāṃkhya and Yoga also have contrary conceptions of the person who is released while still alive, the *jīvanmukta*: the Sāṃkhya liberation (*kaivalya*) and the yogic structure of *saṃprajñāta samādhi* and *asaṃprajñāta samādhi* are different. In Sāṃkhya there is no two stage *samādhi* structure. The later Sāṃkhya tradition however adopted the two stage scheme of Yoga.

Theism and Monism

Sometimes it is claimed that Sāṃkhya is atheistic and Yoga is theistic. Both of these claims can lead to misinterpretation. Sāṃkhya is

more accurately described as non-theistic. It builds on ideas that arose, probably, before the concept of *īśvara* had been developed. The Sāṃkhya of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* nevertheless accepted the old worldview of India of a multitude of divinities. The divine world was conceived as eightfold (*aṣṭavikalpo daivaḥ*, *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 53) and the god Brahmā as the highest being in the world system (*Sāṃkhyakārikā* 54). However, according to Sāṃkhya, divinities, like all other beings, are constituted by a *prakṛti* and a *puruṣa* part. Like Sāṃkhya, Yoga is a self-help method of salvation, the grace of *īśvara* is not the means to salvation. On the contrary, the yogin gains power over the world by means of his supernormal powers as well as the power to break free from matter and attain salvation. In the other yoga traditions, such as the traditions preserved in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, the yogin depended on the grace of Śiva for salvation. Patañjali perhaps demythologised these theistic traditions by making *īśvara* the pure consciousness of the *puruṣa* principle to be meditated upon, but unable to act for the benefit of the yogin. Yoga is not theistic, therefore, in the normal sense of the word. *Īśvara* according to the *Yogasūtra* is not a separate principle, as in the theistic systems of religious thought, but one *puruṣa* among many, with the special property of never having been bound to *saṃsāra*. In the *Yogasūtra* the meaning of *Īśvara* was changed by taking all his powers away and reducing him to a passive principle. *Yogasūtra*, therefore, may represent an attempt of incorporating theistic yoga by demythologising the concept of God and making it subservient to the concept of cessation (*nirodha*).²¹ In his essay, Lloyd Pflieger suggests that for traditional students of yoga learning from the living master, *Īśvara* of the *Yogasūtra* is most meaningfully perceived as the living yogic guru, the master who stands as the proof of the goal and inspires his students. Nevertheless, when the theistic systems of religious thought adopted the *Yogasūtra*, they could use the presence of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* to argue for a theistic yoga.

Yoga as a term for the goal of yoga practice became controversial because the term became involved with theories of ultimate reality. Vācaspatimiśra (9th or 10th century) in the *Tattvavaiśāradya*

²¹ Gerhard Oberhammer, *Strukturen Yogischer Meditation*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 332 (Wien: Verlag Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977).

commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, argued that there are two Sanskrit roots *yuj*. Yoga is derived from a root *yuj* with the sense of concentration (*samādhi*) and not the other root *yuj*, which has the sense of union (*saṃyoga*) (on *Yogasūtra* 1.1.). One definition of yoga is therefore the separation of the self from the material principle (*pumprakṛtyor viyogo 'pi yoga*).²² To many other yoga traditions of Hinduism, yoga means union, that is, union of the self (*puruṣa*, *ātman*) with Śiva (or *brahman*). While this meaning of yoga is not applicable when referring to the classical yoga philosophy, it is valid for many other traditions of yoga and for much of the popular understanding of yoga in Hinduism today. In addition, with the increased popularity of yoga, the authority and fame of the *Yogasūtra* and the yoga practices it describes, lead to the adoption of the text by the monastic orders and gurus who promoted the monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta and who also practised yoga. Disagreements about the meaning of the word yoga, i.e. if it means separation or union, reflect disagreements in the interpretation of the goal of yoga and therefore, to some degree, of ultimate reality as such (see the chapters by Nandini Iyer and Richa Pauranic Clements).

A monistic interpretation of the experience of *samādhi* is recognised also in Sāṃkhya-Yoga. This attainment is defined as the dissolution of the intellect (*buddhi*) in the material principle (*prakṛti*) without a belief in *puruṣa* as a separate principle. This dissolution in *prakṛti* (*prakṛtilaya*), however, which is similar to the realisation of *puruṣa* in the sense that it is contentless, does not lead to permanent freedom from rebirth, according to Sāṃkhya and Yoga, because duality is the only ultimate truth.²³ In the yoga traditions of Advaita Vedānta, on the other hand, a monistic interpretation of the goal of yoga has always been favoured.

The Manifold Forms of Yoga

Throughout the history of the Hindu tradition new schools of yoga have arisen that have incorporated new knowledge and adapted yoga

²² Hopkins, E. Washburn. 'Yoga-technique in the Great Epic.' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901): 333–379.

²³ Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga*.

to religious change. Yoga as a system of bodily postures and breathing exercises was codified in the texts *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, *Śiva Saṃhitā* and *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*. The Tantric tradition added new elements to yoga, yoga was adapted by Advaita Vedānta, and yogic concentration became the model for devotion to God.

Haṭha-yoga

Haṭha-yoga is concerned with strengthening the body as a means to attain mokṣa. This tradition ascribes the origin of yoga not to Hiraṇyagarbha, but to Śiva (*Śiva Saṃhitā* 1.2–3; *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 7.22.) and represents perhaps a different ancient lineage. Gorakhnātha, the second in the line of gurus of the Nātha yogis (12–13th century), is also considered inventor of *haṭha-yoga*. The emphasis in the *haṭha-yoga* texts is on postures (*āsana*-s) and control of the breathing process (*prāṇāyāma*), and especially on the use of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mantra*-s and *mudrā*-s for the purifying of the channels (*nāḍī*-s) of the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*). The goal is to awaken the dormant force called *kuṇḍalinī* in order to attain the union of it (or her, when personified as a goddess) with the principle of consciousness (*puruṣa*, Śiva) in the uppermost *cakra*, the *sahasrāra*.

At the foundation of the *haṭha-yoga* tradition is the physiological and psychological doctrines of Ayurveda, the science of medicine.²⁴ The physiology and psychology of Ayurveda were based on the belief that the vital motor of the person was the breath (*prāṇa*) and therefore the breath was also the carrier of sensation and thought.²⁵ Slowing down and retaining the breath, therefore, aimed at stabilising the psychic activity and focusing one's attention.

Haṭhayogapradīpikā 1.17 says that *āsana* forms the first stage of *haṭhayoga*, and a fundamental value is attached to the mastering of a series of body positions or *āsana*-s. When the *āsana*-s are mastered, *prāṇāyāma* is used to purify the veins (*nāḍī*-s), and this is believed to cause the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*. Because of the centrality of *prāṇāyāma* and cleansing of the *nāḍī*-s for the awakening of the

²⁴ Jean Filliozat, *Religion Philosophy Yoga: A Selection of Articles by Jean Filliozat*, translated from French by Maurice Shukla (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991).

²⁵ Ibid.

kuṇḍalinī, *haṭha-yoga* is also called *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*. The goal of *haṭha-yoga* is to know or to realise ultimate reality, which here is understood as the union of the *kuṇḍalinī* with Śiva in the *sahasrāra cakra*. The seats of the breath (*prāṇa*) were identified as *cakra*-s (circles), and they were thought to be linked by a channel called *suṣumnā*. These entities belong to the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra* or *līṅgaśarīrā*). On each side of *suṣumnā* is a channel, *idā* on the left and *piṅgalā* on the right, representing the moon and the sun. The channels start at the nostrils. According to Śaivite yoga, Śiva is seated in the uppermost *cakra*, and *śakti*, in the coiled form called *kuṇḍalinī*, in the lowest, the *mūlādhāra cakra*. *Mūlādhāra cakra*, corresponds to the element (*bhūta*) earth. When the *kuṇḍalinī* is activated by yoga, she rises through the other *cakra*-s which are thought to correspond to the elements water, fire, air, space and mind, before she unites with the absolute, Śiva. The essay by Craig Davis in this book presents the adoption of *haṭha-yoga* by the seventeenth-century Indian Muslim prince Dara Shukuh, who perceived these Nāth-yogic traditions as not just Hindu but also Islamic. He even claimed that these *haṭha-yogic* exercises could be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad. This illustrates well both the popularity of yoga and the pluralism of yoga traditions.

Tantric Traditions

The Tantric traditions of yoga include visualisation of a divine image and the identification of oneself with the divine principle and the use of sound in meditation. Visualisation, identification and meditation are thought to cause the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*. Awakening of the divine force within is also attained by *nyāsa*, a fixing of the divinities onto various parts of the body. Similarly, mantras are thought to contain the seeds (*bīja*) of the gods and to correspond to parts of the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*) and by using these mantras, the divine forces in the body are awakened. *Mantra-yoga* or *nāda-yoga* is characterised by the use of sound in meditation for the attainment of ultimate reality. Several systems of sound yoga are found in Hinduism. The focus of the essay by Sthaneshwar Timalsina in this book is on Mantra practice and the relationship between Tantric and Pātañjala Yoga. He shows how Mantra meditation is connected to the internalisation of the prāṇic forces and visualisation of the syllables of the mantras in the body. The term *tāntrika* is often loosely applied to refer to all forms of yoga which accept the *nāḍī*-s, *cakra*-s,

and the *kuṇḍalinī*, and the unification of Śiva and Śakti as the goal. Several essays in this book treat yoga in the tāntrika tradition. The essay by Paul Muller-Ortega investigates the understanding of yoga in selected textual passages from two important texts of Hindu Tantra: the *Tantrāloka* and the *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta, the tenth century teacher of Kashmir Śaivism. He especially looks at the Tantric critique of prior forms of Yogic practice, as these are exemplified in the textual passages analysed. Jeffrey Lidke in his essay shows that the yoga of Trika-Kaula tradition of Kashmir Śaivism involved two stages. In the early stages the yogin pursues an introvertive mystical experience with eyes closed, but in the later stages he attains an extrovertive experience with eyes opened. Lidke argues that at the culmination of the practice, the Tantric attains a state of consciousness in which the distinction between inner and outer disappears.

Yoga and Vedānta

Yoga has also become merged with the tradition of Advaita Vedānta, a system of interpretation of the Veda with a philosophy based on the idea of the power of knowledge to attain the object known and the system of correlation developed in the *Upaniṣads*. Yoga of Patañjali represents a different tradition of physical and mental training. In the *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.4, therefore, Sāṃkhya-Yoga is refuted because of its theory of *pradhāna/prakṛti* as an independent principle. As Śaṃkara remarks on the *sūtra*: ‘the truth can be known from the Vedānta texts only.’²⁶ The essay by Richa Pauranik Clements compares the notion of Self in Sāṃkhya, Pātañjala-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta and concludes that there are striking similarities in their texts on the

²⁶ Nevertheless, in the later history of Hinduism, Vedānta adopted the yogic method associated with Patañjali *Yogasūtra* as well as the text itself, claiming that the *Yogasūtra* does not teach that *prakṛti* is an independent principle, but teaches the monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. This reflects the increased prestige of the *Yogasūtra* in orthodox Hinduism and the increased importance of yoga in the monastic institutions associated with Advaita Vedānta. The text *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivarṇa* by the author Śaṃkara, a text composed several centuries after Ādiśaṃkara, reflects the adoption of Yoga by Vedānta. In Vedānta-texts such as *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, Vedānta yoga has become fully manifest. See Andrew O. Fort, ‘Liberation While Living in the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*: Vidyāraṇya’s “Yogic Advaita”,’ in *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought*, ed. Andrew O. Fort and Patricia Y. Mumme (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 135–156.

issues of causality, the inner organ and on the pure-witness consciousness of the Self. The oneness of the Self is the goal of all three and none considers God as important to attain it. Clements concludes that the only difference among the three has to do with the meaning of the oneness of the Self. Nandini Iyer also argues that the view that Sāṃkhya and Vedānta are totally contradictory systems is an exaggeration. In her essay she argues that we do not have to choose between them. She argues in favour of a view of complementary *darśana*-s, calling on the image of the elephant and the six blind men, instead of competing schools. But Sāṃkhya and Yoga distinguish themselves from Advaita Vedānta in believing in the independence of the material principle. The material principle is not dependent on anything else for its existence such as a divinity, souls, or a more subtle principle. The material principle does not exist for the sake of *puruṣa*, as is often asserted. The material principle only becomes manifest for the sake of *puruṣa*.²⁷ In his essay P. Pratap Kumar discusses the influence of Sāṃkhya on another Vedānta system, the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. He shows that the theology of this influential system is rooted in the Pāñcarātra tradition and that this tradition earlier had appropriated the dualism of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system. The essay by Ramdas Lamb describes yoga in the Rāmānanda Saṃpradāya, a movement that traces its foundation to a renunciant that belonged initially to the lineage of the most important theologian of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, Rāmānuja, but who was dissatisfied with the order because of some rules and regulations. They nevertheless kept the philosophy of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Lamb shows how traditions of *tapas* and yoga have blended in the daily life of the renunciants, and his essay describes in detail the yogic exercises performed and the results expected from them.

Yoga and Bhakti

Yogic concentration has become also a model for devotion to God. The onepointedness of devotion is a form of concentration with yogic qualities. The practice of *virāha* ('separation') *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa is a form of yoga. Devotion is combined with renunciation and single minded yoga because devotion to Kṛṣṇa excludes all other concerns

²⁷ Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga*.

and the mind is fixed on Kṛṣṇa, as in the single minded concentration of yoga. According to the *Kapilagītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Kapila taught his own mother Devahūti the principles of Sāṃkhya and in particular devotion to Kṛṣṇa.²⁸ Devahūti is described as a yoginī with matted hair and dressed in tree-bark cloth (3.33,14). She was separated from her husband and son, as a *saṃnyāsīn* is separated from her family. And, because of the separation from her son, she thought constantly of him, so her mind was freed from every kind of worldly attachment (3.33.21–22). By unbroken meditation on Kapila, she attained *samādhi*. Her body had been transformed by yoga and austerity (*tapas*), the texts says, and was now being fed by others; she was covered with filth and looked like a fire covered with smoke. Her hair was dishevelled and her clothes blown about by the wind. Thus, she had followed the path (*mārga*) of Kapila and she attained *nirvāṇa* or *brahman*. This one-pointedness of devotion is a form of yogic concentration and it works because devotion to Kṛṣṇa is said to exclude all other concerns.²⁹ The essay by Tracy Pintchman in this volume discusses a related aspect of *bhakti*-yoga, a women's tradition of Kṛṣṇa devotion in Benares during the month Kartik. In particular she looks at how the portrayal of motherhood in this ritual tradition is connected to the yoga tradition and how the *vrata*-s may function for women as forms of domestic asceticism imbued with yogic values. Ramdas Lamb also notes the strength of *bhakti*-yoga in contemporary India. In his essay on the Rāmānanda Saṃpradāya, he notes that *tapas* and yoga have become less important, but that *bhakti*-yoga remains strong.

The Guru/Yogin

Although many of the yoga traditions have textual foundations, the real foundation of the teaching of yoga is the guru. The practice of yoga is not traditionally learned from books, but from personal instruction. For the practice of yoga, therefore, the oral traditions are the real foundational texts. In spite of the popular image of yogins living alone in caves or other solitary places, many, or prob-

²⁸ Knut A. Jacobsen, 'Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu,' *Orientalia Suecana* vol. 47 (1998): 69–85.

²⁹ Ibid.

ably most, practitioners of yoga belong to organisations that offer them a communal lifestyle. In many traditions of yoga, the later stages in the career of the yogin are often marked by organisational activities and the performance of tasks like teaching students or advising devotees. Antonio Rigopoulos essay analyses the *Gurugītā*, a paradigmatic text on the necessity of the guru. The importance of the guru is related to the absence of any organised institution such as the Church in the West. Rigopoulos notes that the guru or the yogin is expected to act powerfully, and to use his power in a performative way. A yogin who lacked power would not be considered a real yogin. Rigopoulos also notes the great potential for misuse of the power gurus have over their devotees. Ascetics have been clever dealers as well as fierce warriors. He concludes that the purported otherworldly domain of the guru is often a pure illusion: the guru is instead absorbed in mundane and ego-centred concerns.

In my essay, I consider a living tradition of Sāṃkhya-Yoga whose founding figure lived up to the ideal of being indifferent to mundane matters and who cannot be suspected of giving priority to ego-centred concerns. This tradition was founded around the Sāṃkhya-yogin Hariharānanda Āraṇya in Bengal in the first half of the 20th century. There has been a succession of living gurus in this movement, each of whom takes up permanent residence in isolation in the same cave. Hariharānanda Āraṇya, for example, lived isolated in the cave from 1926 till he died in 1947. When he died Hariharānanda's disciple Dharmamegha Āraṇya moved in and lived in the same cave for more than 30 years. The current guru Bhāskara Āraṇya has been living there for more than 20 years. The ultimate purpose for the traditional practitioners of yoga is to detach themselves from the outer world to realise an inner reality. Following Sāṃkhya-Yoga detachment logically leads to social isolation.

The Ādiguru of Sāṃkhya, Kapila, was not traditionally represented in art. In fact, Pratapaditya Pal in his essay shows that we are yet to come across an ancient image of the Sāṃkhya teacher! He argues that the rear 'demonic' face of the four-headed Kashmiri Viṣṇu images that previously has been interpreted as representing Kapila probably has nothing to do with the sage.

Yoga as a Global Phenomenon

Many Yoga traditions have been esoteric. According to the *Hāṭhayogapradīpikā* 1.11, the yogin should keep *hāṭha*-yoga secret, because it has power only when kept secret. Paradoxically, and in spite of this recommendation, no other element of Hinduism has become as popular among non-Hindus as has yoga. One of the Western scholars most sympathetic to yoga, C. G. Jung, warned the West against it. In his essay Patrick Mahaffey notes that Jung thought that yoga would be detrimental to the West. There would be a conflict between faith and knowledge, he thought. Jung did not anticipate, notes Mahaffey, the degree to which yoga would take root in the West during the last thirty years. In fact, yoga has to some degree been a catalyst for spiritual renewal in the West.

Various forms of yoga have been adopted in the West and yoga has enjoyed a growing popularity. Yoga traditions can be divided into two groups: traditions emphasising mental concentration and traditions emphasising bodily postures. Classical yoga is primarily a tradition of mental concentration. In the *Yogasūtra* hardly any emphasis is placed on bodily postures and physical exercise. Posture in the *Yogasūtra* means sitting in a comfortable position. In the first half of the twentieth century yoga as mental concentration was probably the most popular in the West. This form of yoga has remained popular partly because it is in agreement with some fundamentals of Protestantism, argues Wade Dazey in his essay. Judy Saltzman, in her essay, even argues that there are fundamental similarities between Greek philosophy and Indian yoga, thus making yoga part of the origin of the western philosophical tradition.

Many of the modern teachers and schools promoting the yoga of Patañjali, *mantra*-yoga, and *bhakti*-yoga have been quite successful. Swāmi Vivekānanda (1863–1902) and the Ramakrishna Mission were of great importance in the early period of spreading Hindu teachings and the message of yoga to the West, as Wade Dazey shows in his essay. Swami Vivekānanda could perhaps be called the father of modern yoga. He identified four forms of yoga: the yoga of knowledge (*jñāna*-yoga), the yoga of selfless action (*karma*-yoga), the yoga of devotion (*bhakti*-yoga) and royal yoga (*rāja*-yoga). He emphasised meditation and gave a strictly non-dualist interpretation of yoga in accordance with Advaita Vedānta. Paramahansa Yogānanda (1895–1952) who founded the Self-Realization Fellowship, a world wide

organisation, taught the *kriyā*-yoga described in *Yogasūtra* 2.1–2.27. Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) described his approach as Integral Yoga and taught that the higher consciousness attained by yoga would transform the society. He and his French colleague, Mira Richard ('The Mother'), attracted devotees from all over the world to their centre in Pondicherry. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (b. 1911), the founder of Transcendental Meditation, successfully promoted a form of mantra-yoga blended with modern conceptions of social change to the West, initiating millions to the simple practice he favoured. Swāmī Muktānanda (1908–1982) brought a tradition of tantric *kuṇḍalinī*-yoga based on Kashmir Śaivism to the US in 1970. This movement as well has hundreds of centres around the world. Bhagavan Shree Rajneesh (Osho) prescribed new forms of meditation for his audience dominated by Europeans and Americans. *Bhakti*-yoga was brought successfully to the West by Bhaktivedānta Prabhupād (1896–1977) the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The global yoga phenomenon is increasingly associated with health and physical exercise. This type of yoga was influenced by Indian traditions of gymnastics associated with wrestling and by western concepts of physical training, health and healing.³⁰ This western influence explains perhaps why this is the element of Hindu religious life that has been adopted by the most persons born outside of Hinduism. A few styles of physical exercise yoga that were developed in the twentieth century in India, have dominated the global marketplace of yoga with emphasis on physical well-being. The first of these is the Aṣṭāṅga Vinyāsa Yoga ('eigh-limbed moving yoga') promoted by Śrīmān T. Krishnamāchārya (1888–1989) of Mysore and his student K. P. Jois, and developed into Iyengar Yoga by another of his students, B. K. S. Iyengar (1918–), and into Viniyoga by Krishnamāchārya's son T. K. V. Desikachar. The second style is the yoga of the Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh whose teaching is promoted in the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta centres around the world. The Bihar School of Yoga founded by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, a disciple of Sivananda Saraswati, is also influential. But

³⁰ See N. J. Sjöman, *The Yoga Tradition of Mysore Palace*, 2nd ed (Delhi: Abhinav, 1999); Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

there are many other schools and traditions in the West promoting physical exercise yoga.

While yoga as a system of physical exercises leading to physical and mental well-being has had the broadest appeal in the West, performing yoga in accordance with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system means engaging in a disciplined practice seeking perfection in meditation. One seeks this perfection in order to gain immediate knowledge (*vivekakhyaṭi*) of the principle of consciousness (*puruṣa*) as separate from the principle of matter (*prakṛti*) and its manifestations. Vyāsa, in the *Sāṃkhyapravacana* (on *Yogasūtra* 1.51), explains that when the mind ceases to function, the self gets isolated and becomes pure and released. Then the *puruṣa* principle abides in its own form, as it does in the released stage (*kaivalya*) (*Yogasūtra* 1.3). This separation is achieved by non-attachment (*vairāgya*) and practice (*abhyāsa*) and marks the attainment of salvation. This non-attachment (*vairāgya*) and practice (*abhyāsa*) are in the *Yogasūtra* also conceived as a yoga of eight limbs (*aṅga-s*), five exterior limbs and three interior: 1) ethical restraints (*yama*); 2) recommended practices (*niyama*); 3) restraint of the body with respect to postures (*āsana*); 4) restraint of the breathing process (*prāṇāyāma*); 5) withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*); 6) fixation of the mind on an object (*dhāraṇā*); 7) meditation (*dhyāna*); and 8) concentration (*samādhi*). Yoga in the global context is often given a restricted meaning. Sāṃkhya has attracted much less interest than Yoga, and mainly academic interest. That the Yoga philosophy is a tradition of Sāṃkhya often goes unrecognised.

Gerald Larson's unique focus on the all important Sāṃkhya tradition has corrected the record and reinvigorated the understanding of Indian philosophy and its roots. Larson has opened up new ways of understanding by interpreting Indic culture and religion through Sāṃkhya categories. Studying Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Indian philosophy with Gerald Larson, reading the Sanskrit texts with him and learning to interpret them in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga perspective was a privilege. Grateful, we dedicate this *festschrift* to him.

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PERSON, PURITY, AND POWER IN THE *YOGASŪTRA*

Lloyd W. Pflueger

Abstract

God talk in Classical Yoga is full of surprises. The curious notion of *īśvara* ‘the Lord’ in Patañjali *Yogasūtra* (YS), only explicitly mentioned in five *sūtra*-s, is a cornerstone of the YS worldview. This notion, when read independently of the traditional commentaries, reveals a rather impersonal and strikingly powerless deity, essentially just pure consciousness, quite in keeping with the constraints of classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinking. This view of *īśvara* is only reinforced by the trouble traditional commentaries, influenced by the rising current of *bhakti*, take to reverse it by reading in all the traditional personality and power of a more purāṇic conception of god. But *prakṛti* abhors a vacuum: If *īśvara* lacks in power and personality in the YS itself, the unstated and hidden deity of the YS is the successful yogin who is lavished with supernormal powers (*vibhūti*-s/*siddhi*-s) about which both ancient and modern commentaries have little to say. Yet the powers and supernormal perfections of the yogin are invested with *more sūtra*-s than any other single topic in the YS. Ultimately the real deity of the YS, standing in the background of the experiential system, is the yogic *guru*, potent and immanent, protecting, guiding, assuring, and inspiring the aspirant.

Humans talk about god. The referent is not always clear. One of the effects of such god talk (*īśvaravāda*) is to give both speakers and listeners an illusory sense that they actually know whereof they speak. Those who puzzle over such talk very long, I believe, eventually come to see that any terms in human languages for deity, mask a mystery which only deepens more with use. Perhaps scholars of religious texts should simply adopt the convention of substituting ‘X’ for all the god words they encounter, to remind themselves of the mystery and deflate their unearned confidence in nailing down theological meanings. This caveat goes double for mystical texts such as the *Yogasūtra* (YS).

In 195 philosophical aphorisms the Indian sage Patañjali condenses his theistic philosophical worldview and only mentions god (*īśvara*) explicitly in five *sūtra*-s. His complete theology must be derived from a total of eight aphorisms. He cannot be accused of pouring god

over everything. Even so the unique concept of divinity implied is strikingly important and a corner-stone of his whole worldview, the rationale for an experiential and mystical system of salvation. To avoid the frustration, pain, and endlessly revolving circle of rebirth and redeath, Patañjali counsels us to conceive of god, to use god and the symbol of god in a unique way. The ostensible Lord (*īśvara*), defined and wrapped up in short formulae, seems familiar enough at first. Closer inspection reveals that Patañjali's *īśvara*, *qua* *īśvara*, is both familiar and quite foreign, displaying a kind of omniscience and ultimate purity, to be sure, but lacking in personality and power. Commentaries on the YS have tried to restore missing qualities of god, giving an extra glow to the figure of the Lord, that Patañjali himself may not have intended. Beneath the surface of the explicit god talk in the YS there is another divinity with a wealth of supernatural powers. Who and what these explicit and implicit divinities are has more to do with the quest for *human* identity than the quest for the grace of a Supreme Ruler. Yet there is a bridge between the two. Perhaps this bridgework is the ultimate aim of all god-talk—the bridge between the human identity and the ultimate mystery. In this essay we will consider the nature of 'the divine' in the YS. How does the uniquely empty way Patañjali speaks of *īśvara* reflect on the nature of humans and their highest powers? What is the link between the explicit and implicit gods of the *Yogasūtra*?

God Talk in the Sūtra-s

The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali can be read as a system of juxtaposed equations which gather up the significant elements of the Vedic tradition with respect to *yoga*, meditative practice, and loosely tie together an overall viewpoint (*darśana*). The various threads of meditative practice and experience are racked and sorted according to the best conceptual framework of the time, the dualistic twenty-five *tattva*-s, or principles, of Sāṃkhya philosophy, which divide reality into two eternal categories: matter (*prakṛti*) and pure consciousness (*puruṣa*). Although Yoga assumes the basic dualistic structure of the universe given in its sister system of Sāṃkhya, Yoga, unlike the Sāṃkhya of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, refers occasionally to God—a rather rarified and exceptional being *īśvara*, the *Lord*.

This god-talk (*īśvaravāda*) is among the very oldest threads of this classical tapestry. It is clear from the history of Indian religion, as Hauer and others demonstrate, that the concepts of God and meditation were often closely related. The *Yogasūtra*'s synthesis (ca. 400? C.E.)¹ maintains that thread in an enigmatic way. Patañjali's formulae include *īśvara* in the most prominent place in his discussion of meditation, yet in keeping with his genre and style make no general attempt to pull together the doctrine of *īśvara* implicit in the text. This task is left to his audience, commentators and students of Yoga.

In other papers² I have attempted to explore the rather strange concept of God, *īśvara*, in the philosophy of Classical Yoga in a fresh way from the *sūtra*-s themselves, independent as possible of the traditional commentaries.³ Let's review briefly the important characteristics of Patañjali's theology [of consciousness], which may be inferred from the eight pertinent *sūtra*-s supplied (out of the total of 195). The main YS statements with reference to God are as follows:

- 1.23 *Īśvara-praṇidhānād vā.*
- 1.23 Or by meditation on *īśvara* [*śamādhi* is attained].
- 1.24 *Kleśa-karma-viṇāśāyair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ.*
- 1.24 *Īśvara* is the special case of pure consciousness untouched by deposits, fruition, actions or afflictions.
- 1.25 *Tatra nirāśīṣaṃ sarvajñabījaṃ.*

¹ Current scholarly thinking places Patañjali ca. 400–500 C.E.—but the growing possibility that he is one and the same as the great grammarian Patañjali could push the dates back to 150 B.C.E.

² See See Pflueger 'Discriminating the Innate Capacity: Salvation Mysticism of Classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga,' in Robert K. C. Forman (ed.) *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), and 2003 'Dueling with Dualism: Revisioning the Paradox of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* in the *Yogasūtra*,' in *Yoga: The Indian Tradition*, Ian Whicher and David Carpenter, eds. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

³ My interest is to explore as much as possible the concepts of the *Yogasūtra* itself, not so much what the commentator's coming hundreds of years later, have done with the *Yogasūtra* by way of bringing it into harmony with the religious and philosophical thought of later times and movements. Of course this is tricky business. Much of the YS is impenetrable without the commentary of Vyāsa, for example. Even so to be fair to the primary text it is worth letting Patañjali speak for himself as much as possible, not assuming the correctness of any commentary. This may fly in the face of traditional Indian hermeneutical tradition. A fresh, critical, and imaginative rereading of Patañjali may be worth the risk.

- 1.25 In this case the seed of the omniscient [one] is unsurpassed.
 1.26 *Sa pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt.*
 1.26 Since he transcends time, [he is] also the teacher of the ancients.
 1.27 *Tasya vācakah praṇavaḥ.*
 1.27 The sound which expresses him is the *praṇava* [OM].
 1.28 *Tajjāpas tad-artha-bhāvanam.*
 1.28 Meditative repetition of it [results in] realization of its object.
 1.29 *Tataḥ pratyak-cetanādhigamo 'py antarāyābhavaś ca.*
 1.29 From that the consciousness (*cetanā*) within is attained as well as the negation of obstacles.
 2.45 *Samādhi-siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt*
 2.45 *Samādhi* is perfected by meditation on the Lord.

Let's briefly look at each aphorism:

- 1.23 *īśvara-praṇidhānād vā.*
 1.23 Or by meditation on *īśvara* [*samādhi* is attained].

These *sūtra*-s present the Lord and the meditation on the Lord merely as an option (*vā*, or) for the attainment of *asaṃpraññāta samādhi*, the realization of pure consciousness, the very goal of the system, liberation (*kaivalya*). We may judge that attaining pure consciousness through *īśvara* is the means *par excellence*, due to the unusual attention (seven *sūtra*-s)⁴ on this one meditative technique. As an *object of meditation*, God is quite important. But as gods go, Patañjali's *īśvara* does not fit the mold, as much as the later commentators, influenced by the uprise of *bhakti* religion, seem to assume. It's a matter of power—supernormal power. Curiously in this system as strictly defined by Patañjali, *īśvara* has surprisingly little.

Let's briefly inspect the relevant passages. If we look only at the *sūtra*-s we find a god uniquely conceived to fit the needs of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontology and epistemology. Later tradition of commentary will revise this strange conception to fit the needs of *bhakti* tradition. *YS* 1.24 defines *īśvara*.

⁴ Considerably more than any other recommended object of meditation—most of which feature only one or two mentions.

God as Purity (Untouched by Karma)

This all important definition of divinity focuses on *purity*. In other words, God is principally defined as *that which is untouched by karma* or the results of karma, i.e. the material world. Since getting out of the grip of karma is where we want to go, and where salvific Indian philosophy wants to take us, *īśvara* is the model, the paradigm of purity. God is ‘a special *puruṣa*’ or better yet (in my account), ‘a special case of *puruṣa*’. Who or what is *puruṣa*? In Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontology *puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *prakṛti* (primordial matter) are the two *Ur*-principles which make up reality. Though the Vedic hymns speak of a primordial ‘male person’, *puruṣa*,⁵ who is sacrificially dismembered to create the world, the term *puruṣa* in Sāṃkhya-Yoga has a technical meaning beyond the anthropomorphic myth. *Puruṣa* as ‘pure consciousness’ is the real core of our identity as persons, male or female, divine or human. *Puruṣa* is known by contrast with matter, *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is immaterial, separate from matter, subjective, conscious, yet static, eternal, unmoved and unmoving, a witness to the play and display of the dynamic material world.⁶ *Puruṣa* is the uncharacterizable mystery behind all awareness. *Prakṛti* is the tripartite mystery behind all matter, all motion or action, including all mental activity. *Puruṣa* is not psychological, it is *what is aware of the psychological*, what makes the psychological *conscious, seemingly alive*. To know the core of the person, the pure consciousness, all thought must stop (YS 1.2). Since *puruṣa* is beyond matter, beyond time and space, it is also necessarily beyond number. There is, admittedly, convenient talk referring to the *multiplicity* (*bahutvā*) of *puruṣa*-s, but that is philosophically misleading. The principle of pure consciousness *appears* to be *many* because it is *reflected* (as it were) in the material plurality of individual intellects. An actual plurality of individual *puruṣa*-s makes no sense in this unique ontology. *Puruṣa* though the subjective pole in a dualistic system, is in itself a non-dual principle.⁷

⁵ RV 10.90.

⁶ SKK 19. For this reason, since *puruṣa* is contrary to matter it is established as a) a witness, b) eternally separate, c) neutral, d) the perceiver, and yet e) a non-doer. *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa.

⁷ Of course along with *prakṛti* it forms a dual system of co-present ‘matter and spirit’, but as a *tattva* in itself, it is very much unlike *prakṛti*. Matter is always tripartite, a squirming mass of the three ‘strands’ (*guṇa*-s) which form all the objects of the universe in the 23 forms of *prakṛtic* ‘evolutes’. Matter is plural, and creatures,

Prakṛti by contrast is multiple—even tripartite in its unmanifest form, composed as it is by three ‘strands’. Here then is one *bridge* between God and human. The sublime purity known as ‘the Lord’ is nothing other than the non-dual purity of pure consciousness, which is present as the core of every conscious creature, and essentially untouched and free. *So to know ourselves, the very core of ourselves, is to know god*, the Lord, and to be saved. Suffering is really only a misunderstanding of who we really are, an identity with matter rather than spirit. But what is it that spirit knows?

God as Omniscient Consciousness (Untouched by Thought)

1.25 *Tatra nīraṭiśayaṃ sarvajñābījāṃ.*

1.25 In this case the seed of the omniscient [one] is unsurpassed.

The answer, and the other main characteristic of Patañjali’s *īśvara*, is that *puruṣa knows everything*—*īśvara* is omniscient, *Īśvara* ‘knows’ all, because *īśvara* is the principle of knowingness—consciousness, not ratiocination. Thus all thinking (all *thinging*) must stop, in order to become aware of that which not being a thing, is aware of things. The psychological mind must stop its whirling for the light of pure consciousness (which illuminates the whirling) to be clearly distinguished. This is liberating knowledge or the discernment of the difference between the unchanging pure consciousness and the dynamism of *prakṛti*—including the ego, mind, and intellect and all material objects in the universe. So instead of God being the great mentalist, who can answer any question, as in popular devotional piety, this *īśvara* is the impersonal light of consciousness itself. It does nothing but illuminate, it does not think or remember. In this sense it is the witness (*sakṣin*) only. Not a doer or thinker. It is omniscient then in the sense of being that by which all of *prakṛti* is known, seen, witnessed. It is the eternal, unchanging knower in all minds. Without it nothing is ever known.

their minds, and things the minds are aware of are all made of matter. They are all necessarily, plural, discrete, dynamic. Spirit, *puruṣa*, on the other hand is pure consciousness—quite beyond space and time, beyond division, number, and change, and thus beyond differentiation or extension. Consciousness in itself is non-dual—beyond the categories of one or many.

God as Teacher: the Source of Knowingness

1.26 *Sa pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt.*

1.26 Since he transcends time, [he is] also the teacher of the ancients.

Think of it: a deity who is not a doer, who has no will. Doing and willing are all part of *prakṛti*. So this yogic deity is the ultimate in knowing, pure knowingness. Beyond thought. Beyond time. Since ‘he,’ the Lord, is beyond *prakṛti*, beyond time and space, *īśvara* is always available. Pure consciousness is always there to ‘teach,’ and ‘he’ only teaches one lesson to everyone, he teaches what he is, pure consciousness, simply by being pure consciousness, the total opposite, the *totally other* to *prakṛti*. He teaches the lesson which is always beyond the mind, beyond thought. And that’s all one needs to know. The teacher (*guru*) and the lesson are one and never change. The eternal paradigm of pure consciousness.

How to find this teacher, this lesson? By diminution, relinquishment of *prakṛti*. By transcending the material realm, leaving gross thought for finer thought till the finest level of mental activity is left behind for entirely *seedless* (*nirbīja*) *samādhi*, *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, the (YS 1.2) definition of Yoga itself. *Īśvara* is *yoga*. And *Īśvara* is not only omniscient as the knower of *prakṛti*, he is also OM-niscient!

God as Mantra (Ω) (Meditation Inducing Sound)

1.27 *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ.*

1.27 The sound which expresses him is the *praṇava* [OM̐].

1.28 *Tajjāpas tad-artha-bhāvanam.*

1.28 Meditative repetition of it [results in] realization of its object.

One becomes omniscient, realizing one’s true identity as pure consciousness, by extinguishing the operations of the mind. The knowledge of this identity, as *puruṣa*, with *puruṣa*, is the only thing worth knowing, the ultimate thing to know, the knowledge of *everything which saves from suffering*. Salvific omniscience. And the best way to quiet the mind is with the name of god, the name of pure consciousness, the hummm of *praṇava*, the *mantra* *Om*. *Om* is the sound which manifests *Īśvara*. The name of god, it seems is the purest (most *sattvic*) object for meditative reduction of the operations of the mind. If I am correct here, meditative repetition (*japa*) of the sound which evokes

pure consciousness, refines itself quietly through all the quieter and quieter levels of existence Patañjali details, *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda*, *asmīdā*, all the levels of *saṃprañāta* or *relative samādhi*, *prakṛti*-based meditation. Finally this meditative process of settling down brings the mind to its purest and quietest state where the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* can be distinguished, and *prakṛti* dissolves, having finished its job. Patañjali early on noted the consequences of effective meditation, when the waves of the mind settle down:

1.3 *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe ’vasthānam.*

1.3 Then the seer [pure consciousness] abides in its essential nature.⁸

1.4 *vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra.*

1.4 Otherwise [consciousness] appears to be identical with the operations of awareness.

God as Anthropomorphic Object of Devotion

I break with conventional practice in my attempt to understand Patañjali, himself. Wherever possible I try to understand the YS without recourse to the later commentaries which have shaped the traditional understanding—shaped and reshaped Patañjali according to the changing religious and political currents, as theologians are wont to do. I aspire to see what Patañjali saw—to make logical sense of the YS in terms of the basic Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy of the time.⁹ It is a raw viewpoint easy to miss, given the traditional importance of later commentaries in framing and thereby adapting the original text.

Let’s contrast this radical view of god as pure consciousness with the more traditional view of Īśvara in the commentaries steeped in the developing devotional tradition. The popular and devotional conception of God in Hinduism is that of a person equipped with a superabundance of power and perfection. Witness for example Arjuna’s description of the famous theophany of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, also seen as a *yoga-śāstra*:

⁸ Literally: ‘Then there is the abiding of the seer in own-nature.’

⁹ Naturally there is always the likelihood that I am simply adding my voice to the commentaries, i.e. adapting Patañjali to the 21st century, seeing the YS through my own lens. Of course that is true too. I have no other recourse. But a fresh vision of Patañjali based on a sincere attempt to read the *sūtra*-s as a coherent philosophical system in keeping with the assumed ontology of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* can tell us something new. It gives us a simple clear vision of Patañjali’s god as consciousness itself.

I see Thee with many arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes, everywhere infinite in form; I see no end nor middle nor beginning of Thee, O Lord of all, O universal form! (16)

I behold thee with diadem, club and discus as a mass of light shining everywhere with the radiance of flaming fire and the sun, difficult to regard, beyond all measure. (17)

Thou art the imperishable, the highest to be known; Thou art the final resting place of this universe; Thou art the immortal guardian of eternal law; Thou art, I think, the primal spirit [*puruṣa*]. (18)

I behold Thee without beginning, middle or end, of infinite power, of innumerable arms, the moon and the sun as Thine eyes, Thy face as a shining fire, burning this universe with Thy radiance. . . . (19)

Hail to Thee in front and in the rear, hail to Thee on every side, O all; infinite in power and immeasurable in strength. Thou penetratest all and therefore Thou art all. (40)¹⁰

Īśvara is defined in YS 1.24 as *puruṣa-viśeṣa* a special or particular kind or instance of *puruṣa*. If one sees this designation through the doctrine of the plurality of *puruṣa*-s, one would incline with the orthodox commentaries to understand the phrase to mean that Īśvara is a special individual *puruṣa* distinct and separate from all other individual *puruṣa*-s. How does he differ? He differs in that only he is ‘untouched by deposits, fruition, actions, or afflictions’ The commentators understand this to mean that whereas all other individual *puruṣa*-s are first ignorant and may later find liberation, Īśvara is never ignorant, never bound; he is always unblemished and enlightened, without beginning or end:

As there is a prior end to bondage for a liberated person, for Īśvara this is not known. Nor, as there is a later point of eventual bondage for one dissolved into *prakṛti* is there any such thing for Īśvara. He is, however, ever liberated, ever the Lord.¹¹

Further, *Īśvara* is understood as a unique or special *puruṣa* in the sense that he has ‘eternal preeminence’ (*śaśvatike utkarṣaḥ*), by definition, unsurpassed superiority (*aiśvarya*)—for if any one surpassed it, that

¹⁰ Eliot Deutsch (1968), *The Bhagavad Gītā*, University Press of America (New York) pp. 96–99, (B.G.11.16–19, 40).

¹¹ YSB on 1.24: *yathā muktasya pūrvā bandhakoṭiḥ prajñāyate naivam īśvarasya, yathā vā prakṛtīnasya uttarā bandhakoṭiḥ sambhāvayate naivam īśvarasya. Sa tu sadaiva muktaḥ sadaiveśvara iti.*

one would then be the highest one, the Īśvara. The *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* (YSB) on YS 1.24 concludes: ‘Therefore, he whose power is free from any equal or superior is Īśvara, and this is what is implied by the term “*puruṣa-viśeṣa*”.’

Vyāsa, for his part, frames his whole discussion of Īśvara (before 1.24) with a theistic assumption, asking: ‘Now then, who is this [entity] called Īśvara other than *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*?’¹² The implication, which is not entirely clear, is in any case contrary to the idea of Īśvara as pure consciousness only. It probably points to Vyāsa’s understanding of Īśvara as a unique combination of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Certainly there is a sense here that in a philosophical realm of strict dualism, Īśvara is a special case, something beyond, different from, or additional to¹³ the two fundamental components of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontology. Feuerstein, for example, goes so far as to posit that Īśvara is understood here as a third ontological reality in addition to *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*.¹⁴ This may be going too far, but it certainly points out the philosophical dilemma of trying to fit personal theism where neither the *sūtra*-s nor the overarching philosophy have any room. The result is a tangled web which contrasts glaringly with Patañjali’s laconic presentation.

According to Vyāsa (1.24) Īśvara’s ‘... perpetual superiority (*utkarṣa*) is due to the employment of superior *sattva* (*prakṛṣṭasattvopādānād*).’ This *sattva* refers to the *buddhi* (*buddhisattva*) of Īśvara which is the first and most predominantly pure (*sattvic*, i.e. predominating in the *guṇa sattva*) evolute of *prakṛti*. According to Vyāsa, possession of such a preeminent *buddhisattva* (purer, presumably, than the *buddhis* of enlightened *puruṣa*-s who were once ignorant) is the reason why Īśvara is Īśvara. In other words Vyāsa, in the guise of merely commenting, in effect substitutes *buddhi-viśeṣa* a special case of *buddhi*, for *puruṣa-viśeṣa* ‘a special case of pure consciousness,’ which actually appears in the YS. Once Īśvara is relativized, conjoined with an eternal divinely pure, material, and capable intellect—the door is open to personal theism and *bhakti-viśeṣa* a special and personal piety.

Vyāsa supports his philosophically questionable point about God’s supreme *buddhi* by bringing in the authority of scripture (a relatively

¹² *atha pradhāna-puruṣa-vyatirikta ko’yaṃ īśvaro nāmeti*.

¹³ Arya, 1986, p. 282, translates the *vyatirikta* compound ‘in addition to.’

¹⁴ Feuerstein, 1980, p. 1 ff.

desperate and rare defense in Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophizing): for scripture and the Lord's supreme *sattva* mutually and eternally prove each other.¹⁵ The commentary on the next *sūtra*-s, especially 1.25 simply flesh out Īśvara's skeletal *sattva* with all the expected supernatural qualities of a personal God. What Vyāsa leaves out, the later commentators fill in until there is nothing very special about Patañjali's special theology elements.

So far in the specialized vocabulary of the YS itself, the term *īśvara* has been equated to pure consciousness (1.23) in which there is transcendental knowledge (1.25), described as the timeless source (*guru*) of traditional wisdom (1.26). The only specific appellation of this Īśvara has not been by personal or individual name, Viṣṇu or Śiva, but by the 'significant sound' (*vācaka*) *Om*. If Patañjali had a specific personal deity in mind, or an anthropomorphic image it is not indicated in the YS. In fact, given the significant focus on Īśvara it would seem that the YS is intentionally going out of the way *not* to personalize the Lord. Although this seems in keeping with the strict dualism of the system, the commentaries, largely from outside Sāṃkhya-Yoga, seem just as determined to personalize (repersonalize?) the yogic Īśvara, even perhaps, at the expense of understanding Patañjali's system as a whole.

This conflict of interpretations meets its most significant watershed with respect to *īśvara-praṇidhāna* 'meditation' or 'special devotion' directed to *īśvara*. Vyāsa sets the interpretive angle and the diction, as usual, for further commentators by characterizing *praṇidhāna* as *bhakti-viśeṣa*, a special kind of *devotion*:

Due to *praṇidhāna*, a special kind of devotion *bhakti*, Īśvara, being inclined by [this] longing (*abhidhyāna*) alone, bestows grace on him. Thus for the yogin the attainment of *samādhi* and [its] fruit is [made] nearest of all by [sheer] longing.¹⁶

¹⁵ His point seems to be that the infallible perfection of the scripture, esp. the Veda, could only have its source in the supremely pure *buddhi* of God. The argument in 1.25 for the omniscience of God's unobstructed *buddhi* also helps to explain the infallible perfection of scripture, the source of knowledge for all that goes beyond the senses and reason, since it is all-pervasive and independent of instruments for its direct knowledge. Also scripture testifies to the existence and specific nature of God.

¹⁶ (1.23) *praṇidhānād bhaktiviśeṣād āvarjita īśvaras tam anugrhyāti abhidhyānaṃātrena, tad-abhidhyānād api yogina āsamatamaḥ samādhilābhāḥ phalaṃ ca bhavati iti*. To sample another translation, Woods, 1914, p. 48 renders Vyāsa on 1.23:

Vācaspati Miśra comments relatively briefly on this *sūtra*. He amplifies Vyāsa's remarks by glossing *īśvara-praṇidhāna* as 'a special kind of mental, verbal, or bodily devotion' and noting that longing (*abhidhyāna*) means 'the wish that something desired but not attained may be his'.¹⁷ He glosses 'inclined' (*āvarjita*) as 'brought face to face' (*abhimukhikṛta*). This tack is typically literal and anthropomorphic. Vācaspati Miśra is ready to supply explication in terms of devotional detail.

'Mental, verbal, and bodily devotion' would seemingly cover the totality of life—thought, word, and deed. This does not seem to correspond to the simple Oṃ meditation Patañjali mentions. Or perhaps by 'bodily devotion' he refers to devotional ritual such as *pūja*?¹⁸ What is in his mind's eye?

It is quite possible that the image Vācaspati has in mind surfaces in a comment he makes with respect to YS 1.38: Or on the basis of knowledge gained in dreams or in sleep [the awareness gains stability] (*svapna-nidrā-jñānāmbanaṃ vā*). Vyāsa's comment reveals very little, but Vācaspati embellishes a striking anthropomorphic dream-image of Śiva (*maheśvara*) which he suggests for contemplation (outside of sleep). Woods translation does a good job of capturing Vācaspati's poetic *bhakti*

For when in his dream he adores {*ārādhayante*} the Exalted Maheśvara's image {*pratimām*} which abides within a sequestered forest and seems as if it were sculptured out of the moon's orb; [and] its members and limbs are soft as lotus stems; it is made of precious jasmine and Mālati

By devotion, by a special kind of adoration, the Īśvara inclines [to him] and favours him merely because of [this yogin's] profound-desire. Also as a result of the profound desire for Him, the yogin becomes most near to the attainment of concentration and to [isolation] the result [of concentration].

¹⁷ The term *abhidhyāna* might be translated by 'focused thought' or 'meditation'. Its relation to *dhyāna* is obvious. Just so, glossing the word as emotional/devotional is significant here and probably in keeping with Vyāsa's personalistic understanding which comes out more clearly in 1.24 ff. Of course, it is my thesis that this contrasts with what may be understood from Patañjali alone.

¹⁸ Hauer, 1958, pp. 149–151, notes that the *Jābāladarśana Upaniṣad*, an early *Yoga* (or *Sannyāsa*) *Upaniṣad*, which, like the YS, speaks of eight subdivisions of yoga practice, includes in its lists twice as many *yama* and *niyama* practices as the YS. Under *niyama*, however, it omits *īśvara-praṇidhāna* and *svādhyāya* of the YS, but does include *īśvara-pūjana* ('worshipping, honoring the Lord') and *japa*. Although Hauer dates this *Upaniṣad* ca. 500–300 B.C.E. Deussen (1980, pp. 678–715) would put it at the time of the *Mokṣadharma* (200 B.C.E.–200 C.E.) In any case the difference in Patañjali's list and phrasing seems significant: the *bhakti* influence has been essentially curtailed.

flowers; it captivates the heart. When in the very [act of adoration] he awakens with mind in undisturbed calm; then, reflecting upon that same [image] which had become the object supporting the perception in his dream, while his central organ is identical in form with that [object], his mind-stuff *citta* reaches a stable state in that very [condition. . . .]¹⁹

It is interesting that in commentary to 1.27 Vācaspati Miśra also refers to Īśvara with the term *maheśvara* (Great Lord), Śiva's special title. Maheśvara is very much the focus of Vijñāna Bhikṣu's *Yogavārttika* (ca. 1550–1600 C.E.). It seems that the later the commentary, the more explicitly the theistic devotional interpretation is spelled out. Vijñāna Bhikṣu's references leave little to be filled in by the readers reason or imagination. His most important text for interpreting the Īśvara doctrine of Patañjali is the *Līṅga Purāṇa* (9.36.1–18) which he quotes extensively as a clear exposition of the whole meaning of YS 1.24–28.²⁰ *Līṅga Purāṇa* (LP), though it may contain very ancient material, probably dates from around the late eighth century.²¹ Its exposition of the YS seems to combine the essential points of both Patañjali and Vyāsa with a well-developed Śaiva theology. The Īśvara of the YS is here explicitly called Īśā, Maheśvara, Śiva, Sarva, Bhagavān, Parameśvara, Paramātmā, Śambhū, and Rudra, and identified with the supreme *śivatattva*, the principle of Śiva, although it admits that among all of his designations (*vācaka*) the *praṇava*, *Om* is considered the supreme.²²

The LP uses six verses (9.36.1–6) to explicate YS 1.24—establishing that Śiva is not connected in any way with the five afflictions (*kleśa*-s), action (*karma*), fruitions (*vipāka*-s), and impressions (*saṃskāra*-s). It calls him in 9.36.6 *pūṃs-viśeṣa* (a particular man or person; *pūṃs* is roughly equivalent and etymologically related to *puruṣa*) and further spells out Śiva's nature in accord with the devotional theism that we see increasingly reflected in the commentaries of the YS: Parameśvara

¹⁹ Woods, 1914, p. 76. Words in {} are my addition to clarify important terms.

²⁰ The text, quoted in Rukmani, vol. 1, p. 166: *tadidamīśvarapranidhānādvētyādisūtraganoktamarthajātam līṅgapurāṇe spaṣṭam pradarśitam*.

²¹ Farquhar, for example, relegates the *Līṅga Purāṇa* to the middle of the period of the Śākta systems, 550–900 C.E., noting that the *Līṅga Purāṇa* includes a long section on the meaning of *Om* and the letters of the alphabet 'in the manner of the Śākta treatises', pp. 195–6.

²² LP 9.36.12 *'praṇavo vācakatasya śivasya paramātmānah/ śivarudrādisābdānām praṇavo hi paraḥ smrtaḥ/* quoted by Vijñāna Bhikṣu in Rukmani 166–167.

is the Supreme God (*para devo*) and the Blessed Lord (*bhagavān*) and as such is both beyond the entire manifest universe (*prapañcādakṣhīlāt paraḥ*) and free from the conscious and non-conscious (*cetanācetanon-muktaḥ*), i.e., *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*.²³ Later verses of the LP (7–9) parallel to YS1.25–26, establish Śiva as omniscient and guru (even of Brahmā) and seem actually to follow Vyāsa's points more closely than the words of Patañjali. LP 12–13 establishes Śiva as the referent for *Om-japa* and meditation by which one quickly attains the supreme perfection.²⁴ LP 14–8 establishes that Maheśvara is supreme and unitary and without beginning or end while innumerable subordinate Brahmās, Viṣṇus, and Rudras come and go. Although Vijñāna Bhikṣu with his Vedāntin outlook seems to reconcile Maheśvara as the Absolute *brahman* (LP 9.36.14) and the meditative use of *Om* as a means to identify *ātman* and *brahman* (commentary on YS 1.28) the earlier commentaries find little of interest in such impersonal meditative practice.

In Vyāsa and Vācaspati Mīśra we do *not* see the focus on meditative practice which one might expect from Patañjali's explicit identification of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* with *praṇava-japa* in 1.27–29. Vyāsa shows he is aware of this identification in his commentary on 1.29, yet he makes little of it, preferring to emphasize emotional and personal devotion. The commentaries use surprisingly little of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontology, the specific structure and mechanics of a dualistic, realistic world or the systematic and actually mechanistic psychology created for understanding meditative process. Instead the mechanics of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* are more or less reduced to those of devotional religion: the *yogin* longs for the Lord, offering all action, renouncing all fruit in favor of the Lord (YSB 2.1, 2.32). As a result the Lord inclines toward him and compassionately bestows his grace, miraculously enabling *samādhi* by dint of his omnipotence. In this way the Lord and devotional practice must be seen as anomalies, pious exceptions to the dualistic,

²³ *purnvīṣeṣaḥ para devo bhagavān paramēśvaraḥ/
cetanācetanonmuktaḥ prapañcādakṣhīlātparaḥ//*
LP 9.36.6, in Rukmani p. 166.

²⁴ *praṇavo vācakatasya śivasya paramātmanaḥ/
śivarudrādisabdānām praṇavo hi paraḥ smṛtaḥ//*
*śamboḥ praṇavavācyasya bhāvanā tajjapād api/
āśu siddhiḥ parā prāpyā bhavatyeva na saṃśayaḥ*
LP 9.36.12–13, in Rukmani, p. 166.

impersonal viewpoint in the rest of the YS. The approach is clearly mythic rather than philosophical, emotive rather than cognitive.

Vācaspati Miśra shows more of the roots of his interpretation in commentary on the utility or necessity of *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, the main examples of ‘practical yoga’ (*kriyā-yoga*). Set with the perceived challenge of justifying a second discourse on yoga in chapter Two he quotes the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (6.7.33) to support the necessity of a preliminary, purifying stage of yoga. Even more significantly in the same section he quotes a key passage from the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

Your prerogative is in action alone; never ever in the fruits: the motive for action should never be in the fruits, let there not be attachment to inaction.²⁵

Here it seems the interpreters are confusing or intentionally mixing the famous *karma-yoga* of the *Bhagavad Gītā* with the *kriyā-yoga* of the YS. Naturally the *Gītā*, which styles itself as *yoga-śāstra*, a ‘scripture of yoga’, and delineates eighteen ‘yogas’ in as many chapters, is probably a formidable influence on the commentators. The *Gītā*, whose appeal and popularity goes well beyond the YS, but whose thinking is far from systematic, marks the great synthesis of personal and impersonal views of divinity. Of course the personal *bhakti* strain in the *Gītā* is the dominant one. An interpreter who sees the YS through the eyes of the *Gītā*, will not see it clearly in its own right. The unique philosophic vision of the YS cannot be explicated by merely liquefying it in the melting pot of the *Gītā*, where several doctrines are equal, but *bhakti-yoga* more equal. It seems more just to interpret a text in terms of its own categories. If the yoga of the YS is a kind of Sāṃkhya, then such Sāṃkhya-Yoga viewpoints, however impersonal, might best be applied. An understanding of the YS as it is in itself must not overemphasize the elements which most appeal to later philosophical and religious systems.

The term *praṇidhāna* itself has many meanings. It derives from the verb √dhā (place, put) + *pra* (before, in front of) + *ni* (down) (Pāṇini

²⁵ *karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karmaphalāhetur bhūr mā te saṅgo ‘stv akarmaṇi*. He quotes another similar passage from an unknown source which Vijñāna Bhikṣu identifies as *smṛti*:

Whatever I do intentionally or unintentionally, whether propitious or unpropitious, all that I surrender to Thee. I do it all impelled by Thee (*kāmato ‘kāmato vāpi yatkaromi śubhāśubham/ Tatsarvam tvayi saṃnyastam tvātprayuktaḥ karomyaham/*).

8.4.17). The simple sense seems to be *to place down* and/or *in front of*. From this a variety of uses are noted by Monier-Williams including: deposit, place in, bring in, set (a gem) in, apply, touch, turn or direct eyes or thoughts upon, with mind (*manas*) to give whole attention to, reflect, consider.²⁶ As a neuter noun *praṇidhāna* could mean *devotion*, in the sense, perhaps, of *putting down* one's offering *before* the feet of the Lord.

Buddhists use *praṇidhāna* in the classical period to refer to the 'vow, or aspiration' of a new Bodhisattva, subsequent to his accepting the *thought of enlightenment* (*bodhi-citta*), strengthening his resolve to attain enlightenment and to free all creatures.²⁷ This determination might be seen as a kind of devotion, less to the Buddha as Lord than to becoming liberated and liberating, a devotion to duty. This Buddhist usage seems closer to the sense in the YS, than that of sectarian Hindu *bhakti*. In the midst of Buddhist *bhakti*, meditation and impersonal liberation are still in the foreground. Perhaps L. Freer's explanation of the Buddhist usage comes closest also to the sense of the term in the YS: '*Praṇidhāna signifie disposition particuliere d'esprit, application del l'esprit a un objet determine*.'²⁸ This puts *praṇidhāna* clearly parallel to the old sense of *yoga* and meditation as a harnessing or disciplining of the spirit for a particular task, especially the task of liberation.

Indeed, the meditative sense of *praṇidhāna* is the strongest possibility. Kālidāsa uses the term as 'profound religious meditation' or in compounds as 'abstract contemplation of' in *Raghuvaṃśa*.²⁹ Indian medical texts such as *Caraka* and *Śuśruta* used the term in the sense of *applying* a remedy for a disease, such as *mantras* for snakebite.³⁰ The Yogic means of fixing the attention on Īśvara, pure consciousness, was as Patañjali tells us, not by emotional longing before the

²⁶ M. Monier-Williams 1979, p. 660a.

²⁷ Dayal, pp. 64–6. For example, the *Lalita Vistara*, the famous biography of the Buddha, states Siddhārtha's early *praṇidhāna* in this way: 'I will attain the immortal, undecaying, pain-free *bodhi*, and free the world from all pain.' 161.19; 163.16; 175.13; 361.3 etc. The becomes more elaborate in some texts such as the *Sukhāvatī-yūha*; in the *Daśa-bhūmika-sūtra* where it is tenfold.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 64. He quotes Freer in the *Journal Asiatique*, Paris (1881), p. 476.

²⁹ M. Monier-Williams, p. 660.

³⁰ According to the Indian medical science of the time, Ayurveda, *mantras* were key components in healing rituals, and well known, even to the present day for their ability to neutralize such concentrated poisons as snake venom. Even later more 'rational' medical methods in later times were recommended to be used '*mantra-vat*', 'like *mantra*-s.' See here K. G. Zysk on *mantra* use in Ayurveda, (1989).

image of the Lord, nor by renouncing the fruit of daily activities in his name, but by mentally *applying oneself* to the name, the *mantra* *Om*, which reduces mental activities to the silence of pure consciousness. To understand this more completely, we must go more deeply into the history and earlier traditions behind this practice, for which there is little room here.

If we assume the possibility that Yoga as a *theistic darśana* has in *īśvara* only a very impersonal Lord, whose divine nature is merely pure consciousness, omniscient in a salvific sense but *not* an omnipotent doer, does Patañjali then leave the yogic universe with a power vacuum? Not at all. *Functionally* there are other Lords in Patañjali's world; things are not always as they seem. Indeed, one might argue, beyond the obvious *īśvara* of Books One and Two, who functions only as an object of meditation, the real god or gods (in a traditional sense) of the yogic universe are revealed in Book Three: The Epiphany of Divine Powers (*Vibhūti-pāda*).

The Bridge: God as Yogin (Siddha)

Where the concept of deity is so divested of phenomenal power and supernatural glory, the concept of the human being, *qua yogin*, rises to fill the vacuum. In Book Three of the YS we come to see the successful yogin and his earthly Master are the *real* God(s) of Yoga.³¹ It will be instructive in this regard to review the range of divine or supernormal powers (*vibhūti*-s, *siddhi*-s) unabashedly attributed to the yogin himself as he increasingly purifies his mind/body complex.

Supernormal Powers in Chapter One

In the first chapter of the YS mention of supernormal powers other than the eternal omniscience and untouchable purity of *īśvara* is relatively infrequent. Here the basis of powers and liberation is the main focus—meditative states. The chapter offers an overview of the

³¹ By *real* god here, I mean the notion of god in the popular sense of an anthropomorphic person with omnipotence as well as omniscience as evidenced in the literature of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotion. From the viewpoint of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, both *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are equally real.

salvific meditative path. The extension of human capacity in Chapter One is directly oriented to the development of extraordinary states seen in the two kinds of *samādhi* and the four levels of *samāpatti*, as well as the state of dispassion and supreme dispassion. There is mention of intensity of fervor (1.22), the necessity of faith, energy, mindfulness, coherent awareness (*samādhi*), and intuitive perception (1.20), and a series of means to make the awareness tranquil, clear and steady (1.33–39).

As the chapter progresses, it becomes clear, however, that the yogin's states of coherent awareness involve unusually *subtle and luminous perceptions* (1.36, 1.144–47). Indeed, a particular level of subtle perception (*nirvicāra samāpatti*) (1.48) which reveals truth (*ṛtambharā prajñā*) is mentioned. These levels of meditation are the *basis* of supernormal power. In the following chapters these powers are discussed at great length.

Supernormal Powers in Chapters Two, Three, and Four

Chapter Two offers a list of supernormal attainments technically known later as *vibhūti*-s or *siddhi*-s.³² These powers are achieved by perfecting the so-called *external* subdivisions of yoga. YS 2.28 states ‘*When the impurities are destroyed by the performance of the [different] subdivisions of yoga, the light of knowledge [extends all the way] up to the perception of the difference [of buddhi and puruṣa].*’ It is clear that these powers are meant to represent an ever-extending range of mastery up to the final perception of the difference between *buddhi* and *puruṣa*, the doorway to *kaivalya*.

³² The term *vibhūti*, used as the title of YS chapter 3, comes from verb root *bhū + vi*, which means to arise, be manifested, developed, expand, appear, suffice, be adequate; pervade, or fill. It is related to noun *vibhu* meaning *Lord, ruler, sovereign, or king*—also applied to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva as well as the sun and the moon. As an adjective *vibhu* can mean omnipresent, far-extending, all-pervading, abundant, mighty, or great. The term *vibhūti*, then, has a wide range of meanings and associations: development, multiplication, expansion, plenty, abundance, manifestation of might, great power, superhuman power (esp. eight faculties *aṣṭaman* etc.), the might of a king or great Lord, sovereign power, greatness, splendor, glory, magnificence, fortune, welfare, etc. (Monier Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary).

The term *siddhi* (4.1) is also used in yoga philosophy for supernormal powers. It comes from the verb *√sidh* (weak form of *√sādh*) to succeed, attain, be accomplished, be successful, to hit a mark, to attain one's object, become perfect, attain beatitude; to be valid, to be proved or demonstrated etc. (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 1215).

Chapter 3 continues the list of powers attained by perfecting the subdivisions of yoga, focusing on the *internal* subdivisions, the trinity of fixity (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and coherent awareness (*samādhi*). These three components of the meditative process are practiced simultaneously. As the overall practice of meditation they are given the name of *convergence* (*saṃyama*). This *convergence* is separated for the sake of analysis into three elements.

The first, *fixity* (*dhāraṇā*) means ‘holding awareness in a [particular] place.’ (3.1) Vyāsa notes that this means either an object (*Om*, for example) or a location such as the *cakra* of the navel, the lotus of the heart, forehead, etc.³³ The second practice, *dhyāna*, *meditation* is the ‘continual abstraction of a single object in this fixity’ (3.2). This is the repetitive element, the essence of *japa*, a continuous flow of a particular thought which is free (with detachment) to sink to quieter and more subtle levels of repetition and concomitant experience. *Coherent awareness* (*samādhi*, the third practice, is the resultant state of one-pointedness in which the repeated object ‘presents itself [transparently] as the object alone.’ In terms of meditative levels, *convergence* only involves the bottom three levels of absorption free of ordinary thinking, judgments, and verbal mixture, i.e. the *nirvītarka* levels.

In these levels coherent awareness is so strong as to exhibit a great empowerment of the human mind, an epiphany of divine potential.

³³ It is interesting that later forms of yoga, particularly Tantric forms go into much explicit detail with respect to mystical physiology of such places, the seven major *cakra*-s and countless minor ones, which are inevitably connected with mantra repetition and the theory of *kuṇḍalinī*.

It is a curious fact that in the modern West, the thinking process is felt to be located in the head. William James, for example, located the human sense of individuality, the locus of our sense of individual consciousness as identical with certain almost subliminal sensations of ‘intracerebral muscular adjustments’ and ‘breath moving outwards between the glottis and the nostrils.’ (‘The Notion of Consciousness’ in *The Writings of William James*, p. 183, J. J. McDermott, ed. 1967). Such a view is undoubtedly promoted by the scientific knowledge of brain function. Since, however, the brain is not a tactile organ there is no real reason other than cultural why thought or awareness should be ‘felt’ and localized in the head. Non-Western cultures and Western culture before modern times have almost universally located the thinking process in the heart or navel regions. That the yogin might hold his thinking, even of a mantra, in a variety of locations is not so odd as it may sound. Shifting the felt location of the thinking process even a short distance might, indeed, result in a corresponding shift from the habitual narrow identification with the mind/body complex to an expansive, more impersonal identity.

Just as a laser beam, every photon coherently in step both in phase and frequency, displays exponentially greater power than the scattered and diverse light from an ordinary bulb, so the supernormal powers of the coherent human awareness necessarily result from *samādhi*: Patañjali lists them matter-of-factly. The following table will help to organize the material stretching over three chapters:

Mastery of:	Results in:
moral laws (<i>yama</i> -s): (such as)	
(2.35) non-violence	hostility abandoned in one's presence
(2.36) truthfulness	results of action conform to one's speech
(2.37) non-stealing	all jewels present themselves to one
(2.38) chastity	special power (<i>vīrya</i>)
(2.39) non-attachment	perfect knowledge of mysteries of birth
disciplines (<i>niyama</i> -s)	
(2.40) cleanliness	disgust for others bodies lack of sexual attraction purity of awareness inner happiness one-pointedness mastery of senses capacity for experience of pure consciousness
(2.42) contentment	incomparable happiness
(2.43) purification	perfection of body and senses
(2.44) internalization	communion with chosen deity
(<i>svādhyāya</i>)	
(2.45) <i>īśvara-praṇidhāna</i>	perfection of <i>samādhi</i>
(2.48) yogic postures	no affliction from pairs of opposites
(2.52) (4th) breath control	that which obscures illumination is destroyed
(2.53) (same)	capacity for mental fixity
(2.55) sense withdrawal	supreme mastery of the senses
(internal subdivisions)	
(3.5) convergence	inner intuitive vision
Special Applications:	
Convergence on:	Result in:
(3.16) 3 processes of transformation ³⁴	knowledge of past and future

³⁴ More details about this convergence and the mechanics of time are furnished in both 3.52 and 4.12–4.16.

Table (*cont.*)

Mastery of:	Results in:
(3.17) distinction of sound, object, and idea	knowledge of sounds of all beings
(3.18) direct perception of mental impressions	knowledge of former births
(3.19) direct perception of thoughts	knowledge of another's mind
(3.21) appearance of body	invisibility
(3.22) action [or karmic impressions] (<i>karma</i> [or <i>karmāśaya</i>]) or on omens	knowledge of death
(3.23) friendliness etc.	corresponding strength
(3.25) directing light of subtle sensory processes	knowledge of the subtle, the obscure, or the distant
(3.26) the sun	knowledge of the cosmos
(3.27) the moon	knowledge of the arrangement of the stars
(3.28) the pole star	knowledge of stellar motion
(3.29) navel circle (<i>cakra</i>)	knowledge of body structure
(3.30) throat cavity	disappearance of hunger and thirst
(3.31) 'tortoise' nadi	steadiness
(3.32) light in the head	vision of Perfected Ones
(3.33) [light of] intuition (<i>prātibha</i>)	knowledge of everything
(3.34) the heart [cakra?]	knowledge (perception, awareness) of the faculty of awareness (<i>citta-saṃvit</i>)
(3.35) that-which-exists-purely-for-its-own-sake (knowledge of <i>puruṣa</i>)	consciousness
(3.36) knowledge of <i>puruṣa</i>	divine intuition (<i>prātibha</i>) divine hearing divine feeling divine sight divine taste divine smell
(3.38) loosening of cause of bondage [to the body] and knowledge of movement ³⁵	entrance of awareness into another[']s body

³⁵ This power as well as the powers in 3.39 and 3.40 may not be the result of convergence per se, although inclusion in the context of other convergences seems to imply as much. The grammatical construction is not parallel to the phrasing of the other convergences before and after. The mastery of the *up-breath* and the *middle-breath* might have more to do with *prāṇāyāma* than convergence. Even so there is

Table (cont.)

Mastery of:	Results in:
(3.39) conquest of the 'up-breath' (<i>udāna</i>)	one is unimpeded with respect to water, mud, thorns, etc. and [power of] ascent
(3.40) conquest of midbreath (<i>samāna</i>)	effulgence
(3.41) relationship between hearing and space	divine power of hearing
(3.42) relationship between body and space and absorption in [the thought of] a light cotton tuft	movement through space (or sky)
(3.43) discarnate awareness ³⁶	destruction of that which obscures illumination
(3.44) grossness, essential nature nature, subtlety, inherence, purposefulness of the elements ³⁷	conquest of the elements powers of miniaturization etc. ³⁸ (i.e. magnification, levitation, ³⁹ extension, ⁴⁰ irresistible desire, lordship, sovereign command, ⁴¹ wish realization), perfection of the body, invulnerability

no reason to doubt the possibility of convergence of the mind upon breath since the two are characteristically closely related in yoga.

³⁶ This occurs in the context of other convergences but it is unclear whether it is a convergence itself or the result of something else, for example, the *prāṇāyāma* mentioned with the same terminology in 2.52. *Discarnates* as a class of being (which along with *prakṛtilaya*-s may represent a detour in the ladder of accession of meditative states 'with-seed' towards the ultimate 'seedless' state) are mentioned in 1.19. Here the discarnate experience is treated in a more positive context as something which purifies the *buddhi*. This is understandable since identification of pure consciousness with the mind/body complex is the main feature of egoism and ignorance. Some loosening of this identification is already foreshadowed in 3.38 which describes the mechanics of awareness entering another(s) body.

³⁷ This means convergence on the first of the triad of object perceived, process of perception, and perceiver. This convergence which must be on *śavīcāra* level of meditation (*saṃpatti*) though with respect to grossness, possibly even the *śavītarka saṃpatti* is involved.

³⁸ The etc. seems to be a reference to the eight classical supernormal powers listed in parentheses. The Sanskrit terms are *āniman*, *mahīman*, *laghīman*, (*garīman*), *prāpti*, *prākāmya*, *vaśitva* (*iśitva*), *iśīrtva*, and *yatra-kāmā-vaśāyitva*. See Vyāsa's commentary for YS 3.45. For slightly different list see SK 48.

³⁹ Though Vyāsa does not mention it, some lists include the opposite of such levitation, *garīman*, 'becoming heavy,' 'heavitation?,' as in SK 48.

⁴⁰ From Vyāsa's commentary this power means something like omnipresent reach, i.e., touching the moon, etc.

⁴¹ This power according to Vyāsa means 'to govern manifestation, disappearance, and disposition [of the elements etc.]'

Table (*cont.*)

Mastery of:	Results in:
(3.47) perception process (<i>grahana</i>), i.e., its essential nature, am-ness, inherence, purposefulness	mastery of the senses: speed fast as thought, perception without senses, ⁴² conquest of unmanifest, matter (<i>pradhāna</i>) ⁴³
(3.49) knowledge of the difference between intellect and pure consciousness	dominion over all states of existence, omniscience, infinite knowledge, cessation of thinking about one's own existence, cessation of afflictions, cessation of action or impressions of action.

Reading the list of *siddhi*-s, even in this condensed format, must serve to dispel the idea that supernormal powers are of little importance in the YS. The list is a yogic inventory of the far range of human potential—where *the human and the divine coalesce*. In a sense reading the inventory of supernormal powers is similar to reading a litany of divine names (*nāma-stotra*).⁴⁴ Such appellations in a *nāma-stotra* are often not simple names but actually short descriptions of the superior nature and superpowers of the deity. Here the powers and perfections of the yogin who is approaching liberation are invested with *more sūtra-s and more continuous attention than any other single topic in the YS*.⁴⁵ Is this merely a testament to popular Indian fascination with ‘magic and superstition?’ Hardly. The text is a serious philosophical text—not meant for popular consumption, nor for romanticizing the charisma of the yogin. Here economy not lavish devotional praise

⁴² This may be a clue as to the nature of the state of the discarnate (*videha*-s).

⁴³ This may be the achievement of *prakṛtilaya*-s, although to achieve such mastery would not imply actually becoming dissolved into *prakṛti* in a state of the ‘false liberation’ as the *prakṛtilaya*-s are said to experience (see Vyāsa on 1.19).

⁴⁴ Such as *Śrī Viṣṇusahasranāmastotra* and other similar texts.

⁴⁵ Since the YS is about meditation which is by definition the cultivation of ‘supernormal states of awareness’ it is difficult to differentiate such states from their inherent power(s) to quantify an *exact* number of *sūtra*-s related to supernormal powers. A relatively conservative count (including the powers of Īśvara) would put the total above 50. The long stretch from 2.28–3.48 which systematically defines the subdivisions of yoga actually puts more attention on the powers derived from each perfected subdivision. The powers seem to act as concrete verifications for what seems to be otherwise exceedingly subjective and/or abstract attainments. The proof of the meditative pudding is in the *detached* enjoyment of the power—all the way up to the state of pure consciousness, or Īśvara itself.

(as in the *nāma-stotra*) is the stylistic *desideratum*. Analysis of cause and effect and structural equations dominate the text. The surprising amount of attention devoted to powers must indicate that Patañjali saw them as an intrinsic part of the yogic path to liberation.

Comparing the mention of Īśvara and his qualities in Chapter One with those of the yogin in Chapters Two, Three, and Four one must admit that the interpretation of Īśvara as a personal god reduces his stature to insignificance next to that of the yogin. If one is looking for the *functional equivalent* of the personal sectarian Īśvara, Maheśvara or Mahaviṣṇu, the majestic all-attractive, all-powerful wonder-worker, one must pass over Patañjali's Īśvara for the *siddha-yogin*⁴⁶ himself.

The yogin's powers are essentially no different than those mythically attributed to Prajāpati, Hiraṇyagarbha, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and other *deva*-s (as well as the later great goddesses, Devī, Lakṣmī, and their *śakti*-s, etc.). The traditional powers of the personal god are here equivalent to the yogins whose mental absorption with the material world qualify them along their path as lords of creation (*prakṛti*). Even though such lords are technically *ignorant*—bound still by the basic misunderstanding of who they are, their progress in purification of the awareness must manifest in powers (*vibhūti*) which act as mileposts (and also tests) on the way to final isolation of pure consciousness.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ A *siddha-yogin* means a perfect yogin, possessed of all phenomenal powers, *siddhi*-s.

⁴⁷ Powers *must* manifest because coherent awareness has completely different properties than incoherent, ordinary consciousness, just as distilled water has completely different properties, electrical, chemical, and optical, for example, from ordinary tap water or the water in a mud puddle.

These powers are *mileposts* because their availability for yogins is predicated on the availability of *samādhi*, highly coherent awareness. We might suppose that one's awareness could seem smooth, tranquil and coherent without in fact being actually coherent enough to be called *samādhi*. Such pseudo *samādhi* might be due to desire, self-delusion, suggestion, superficial intellectual analysis, alcohol, etc. The acid test for *samādhi*, it seems, is the epiphany of the attributes of coherent awareness in the form of the supernormal capacities—not unlike the faith which moves mountains in the New Testament.

The attainment of the powers of coherent awareness acts as a test, it would seem, as well. It is not only the practice of *japa* etc. to quiet the mind, but the requisite detachment from such exciting, head-turning success that enables a yogin to use such coherent awareness as a stepping stone to final *asamprajñāta samādhi*, the total quiescence of mental activity in the state of pure consciousness.

The great interest Patañjali displays in such supernormal powers of the yogin are generally *not* echoed by the devotionally oriented commentaries (whose Lords might not enjoy the competition). Vyāsa, for example, who lavishes many lines or even paragraphs on the preceding *sūtra*-s limits his commentary on the first sequential supernormal power to two words! His commentaries on most *siddhi*-s is extremely brief with the exception of the few *siddhi*-s which allow him to expatiate on other subjects such as the nature of language (3.17), karmic impressions (3.18), or the elaborate structure of the cosmos (3.26). Although in 3.45 he goes into some detail itemizing the eight traditional *siddhi*-s, he never comes to terms with their importance. Unless they provoke discussion of other aspects of yoga they are evidently something of an embarrassment. In fact, in 3.45 the sheer omnipotent splendor of the yogin possessing the eight traditional *siddhi*-s obviously calls Vyāsa's concept of Īśvara into question. Why, he seems constrained to ask, should such an omnipotent yogin not himself restructure all of creation? Vyāsa can only answer 'Due to the intention of another One, previously perfected, who has [already] realized his desires with respect to the elements as they are.'⁴⁸ Īśvara, the devotee's personal god, has priority not because he is *more* powerful, but because he was *first*. Perhaps the sense is that of a gentlemen's agreement between omnipotent yogins and God not to upset the apple-cart of creation. Such powers in human hands do not seem to fit comfortably into Vyāsa's concept of Īśvara.⁴⁹

Vācaspati offers a short sentence as the first rationale for the powers. In his introduction to YS Chapter Three he observes that whereas *samādhi* and its attainment were the subject of Chapters One and Two, 'in the third chapter the supernormal powers (*vibhūti*-s) which correspond to (and/or favor) this [*samādhi*], *being the cause for the arising of faith*, are to be described.'⁵⁰ Surely the promise of personal omnipotence is more than one might need to inspire faith. Even so, Vācaspati's comment along with the fact that he gives the powers a

⁴⁸ *kasmād anyasya yatrakāmāvasāyinaḥ pūrvasiddhasya tathābhūteṣu saṃkalpāditi.*

⁴⁹ Vyāsa does note the existence of gods at the higher levels of creation (but within creation). These divine beings, for example, in the Satya-world, the third world of Brahṃā, occupy levels and powers which correspond to their mental mastery of each successive level of *samprajāta samādhi* (3.26). To be sure in this Vyāsa acknowledges the homology of the yogin with the gods—but not the God, Īśvara.

⁵⁰ *trīṭhyapāde tatpravṛtṭyanuṅgaḥ śraddhotpādahetavo vibhūtayo vaktavyāḥ.*

little more attention than Vyāsa seems to indicate, in his account, a more positive, if not central, significance for the *siddhi*-s.⁵¹

Most modern commentators have focused not on the abundance of supernormal power evident in the YS, but on their insignificance or even their danger. It is evident that Patañjali's interest proves an embarrassment for many modern scholars' enlightenment prejudices about what Indian philosophy ought to be. Supernatural powers by their very existence seem to go against the rational predetermined structure of creation. The problem is even worse when they are affirmed to be wielded by mere mortals. The fact that *siddhi*-s fit perfectly well into Patañjali's understanding of the meditative mind and its relation to the subtle structure of the world has been lost on most.

Radhakrishnan, whose views in this matter seem to represent the conservative majority, abjures the powers as low naturalism, popular magical residues disconnected with a yogins spiritual progress.⁵² Oberhammer claims Patañjali's yoga gives them no importance.⁵³ Dasgupta, who wishes to correct popular misunderstanding of yoga as consisting of [merely] such practices for attaining powers⁵⁴ sees no value in them other than their strengthening of faith.⁵⁵

Often the supernormal powers have been dismissed for their putative danger. Even Eliade and Hauer, who go a long way toward recognizing the intrinsic importance of the *siddhi*-s, give credence to their danger—a reading of YS 3.37 and 3.51, which as Pensa points out springs from a only partial use of the text.⁵⁶

The two *sūtra*-s which may be read as warning are very limited in their application. The first, YS 3.37 reads: *In samādhi these are epiphenomenon* (or possibly 'obstacles,' *upasarga*);⁵⁷ *in ordinary awareness they are*

⁵¹ Though he gives a bit more attention to the yogins supernormal powers, Vācaspati, perhaps by way of compensation, must attempt to give even more power to Īśvara. His reply to the question of why a yogin does not reverse the structure of creation promotes Īśvara to Paramēśvara.

⁵² S. Radhakrishnan (1956), pp. 366–68.

⁵³ Oberhammer (1965), p. 102.

⁵⁴ Dasgupta (1930), p. 1.

⁵⁵ Dasgupta (1924), p. 158.

⁵⁶ Pensa (1969), pp. 198–200.

⁵⁷ The term *upasarga* may also be read as 'obstacle.' However, in the light of the wider context of the *siddhi*-s as by-products of highly sought states along the way to liberation, the less traditional but equally possible meaning of epiphenomenon (or by-product) recommends itself.

supernatural powers. If this is a warning, it seems only to refer to the divine powers of perception which result from convergence on *puruṣa*.⁵⁸

Likewise 3.51, which warns of unwanted consequences from invitation of beings in [high] spheres occurs in the context of ultimate renunciation of the omniscience and omnipotence that come from discriminative discernment. The ‘invitations’ seem here to pale by comparison with the yogin’s own powers of omnipotence and omniscience (3.49). In this context, the *sūtra* seems to underscore the yogin’s state of grace rather than to warn him from being ‘lead into temptation.’ What could the (jealous) gods offer one who already has omniscience and omnipotence? The *sūtra* seems to be stating that the yogin is free from the possibility of falling into the impure states of pride and attachment—his meditation and perfection up to this point have all been predicated on his increasing detachment and discipline. In any case, it is clear that the supreme detachment which renounces the powers of creation and the highest pinnacle of phenomenal knowledge is a prerequisite for final liberation. Even so, the *siddhi*-s born of *samādhī* (as opposed to those born of herbs or past-life merit, 4.1), Patañjali observes, leave *no* karmic deposits of merit or sin (4.6) and, thus, do not lead to the bondage of attachment or aversion.

It seems natural, if not quite in keeping with Patañjali’s emphasis in the text, that commentators ancient and modern, seize upon these two *sūtra*-s to de-emphasize the attraction of powers and reemphasize the requisite detachment which liberates. However, to be fair to Vyāsa we must note that even he (3.55) admits the suitability of powers for the purification of the intellect⁵⁹ and in 3.33 describes ‘divine intuition’ (*prātibha*) (a supposed ‘obstacle’), as ‘liberating’ (*tāraka*).

In a classical philosophical text that so unabashedly showcases yogic powers there is good reason both for modern scholars in their enlightenment denigration of magic and the supernatural, and traditional commentators in their desire to emphasize the proper attitude of detachment, to express caution. Unfortunately these attitudes easily obscure the positive, intrinsic role supernatural powers play in the YS.

⁵⁸ It should also be recognized that a warning about all the powers would probably not be made at this juncture, but at the introduction of the powers or the introduction of the chapter on powers.

⁵⁹ *sattvaśuddhidvāreṇaitatsamādhijam aiśvaram*.

A number of scholars including Kane,⁶⁰ Eliade,⁶¹ Hauer,⁶² Pensa,⁶³ and Feuerstein,⁶⁴ are now recognizing the important role of the supernatural powers in Yoga philosophy. Pensa's work has been the most thorough and comprehensive. He concludes that:

... the 'power' element, implicit or explicit as it may be, is intrinsic to the very structure of Yoga, in close correlation with the concepts of purification and knowledge. ... Each implies and is implicit in the other: progress in one means progress in the others, nor could any progress be thinkable outside this organic interaction. ... As to the 'powers' or 'perfections' (*vibhūṭis*, *siddhis*), they are no other—as we feel has been made sufficiently clear by the textual analysis—than specializations of this power, which, in correct Yoga practice, are used for the same purpose, i.e. purification (*sattvaśuddhi*) and knowledge (*sarva-jñāna*, *purusa-jñāna*). ... In consequence, neither power nor 'the powers,' if we want to make this distinction, can be in any way separated from Yoga's essentially organic and unitary structure; considering them as spurious elements or magical residues has no textual basis.⁶⁵

There is much more to the yogin than his power. As the Upaniṣadic Ultimate (*brahman*) admitted of a higher and lower variety, so in the YS it would appear that the Ultimate Īśvara is pure consciousness, while the functional equivalent of a lower Īśvara is the yogin himself, at the zenith of his *phenomenal* career, at the doorstep of final enlightenment. We must recall that the yogin's power is understood as a by-product and confirmation of progress towards ultimate purity *rather than ultimate power as an end in itself*. Progressive purification of awareness in the direction of liberation renounces power and personality for pure consciousness alone. The ultimate Lord of yoga philosophy is pure consciousness—neither powerful, nor active, beyond all desire, immaculate, and, complete in itself. *This* god's *grace* is not granted nor bestowed, nor even discovered in oneself—it is discovered *as* oneself.

⁶⁰ P.V. Kane (1962), pp. 1451–2.

⁶¹ Eliade (1969), pp. 85–90, 177–80.

⁶² Hauer (1958) p. 324 ff.

⁶³ C. Pensa (1969), pp. 194–228.

⁶⁴ Feuerstein (1980), pp. 101–108.

⁶⁵ Pensa (1969), pp. 214–215.

Levels of 'the Lord'

In the end the nature and expressibility of god talk is a matter of definition and perspective: what do we mean by the term 'god' or 'divine'? There are many Lords or levels of the divine in the YS. If we conceive of Īśvara as this summum bonum, the highest value which subordinates all other values and alone completes the meaning of existence,⁶⁶ then Patañjali's Īśvara is the impersonal *puruṣa*, the mysterious principle which illuminates all yogins, and all things. If we conceive of Īśvara as the salvific meditative bridge between ordinary consciousness and pure consciousness, then Īśvara is pure sound and silence, the *praṇava*, the mantric sound *Om* that serves as the medium of the meditative journey *par excellence*. If we conceive of Īśvara as the highest personal power in the relative world of *prakṛti*, then this God, omnipotent and omniscient, is the yogic *siddha*. In all probability the earliest and ultimate such *siddha* and Lord, is the earliest guru in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *guruparamparā*. Whether this is the sage Kapila, as incarnation of Viṣṇu, as Vācaspati believes⁶⁷ or Patañjali himself, perhaps as an incarnation of *adīśeṣa* or Lord *Śiva himself*, we may not know for sure, without the aid of supernormal powers. In any case it seems clear from the YS, taken in the context of practice rather than mere theory, that the most central meaning of *īśvara* is the image of the living yogic guru. The power of the living yogic master, for his students must represent, even incarnate, the great masters of the tradition, and with them the anthropomorphic divine, such as Viṣṇu or Śiva. Even today, when yogic texts are accessed by paperback or internet, in the final analysis for serious practitioners it is the living guru who initiates the aspirants and kindles their devoted emulation. The master stands as the proof of the goal, the possibility of attainment. Above all it is the living master who inspires the students as *yogeśvara*, to attain the highest levels of power, and even further, to renounce that power for the perfection of pure consciousness.

⁶⁶ Apologies to Paul Tillich for his famous definition of religion in terms of the 'ultimate concern'.

⁶⁷ See Larson (1987), pp. 107–112.

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REVISITING THE JĪVANMUKTI QUESTION
IN SĀṂKHYA IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE SĀṂKHYASŪTRA

T. S. Rukmani

Abstract

Sāṁkhya argues for a state of liberation while still embodied (*jīvanmukti*), as is evidenced in the *Sāṁkhyakārikā*. But the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* does not dwell on this concept clearly and strongly and thus it left a lot of room for later commentators to borrow vocabulary from both the Yoga and Advaita Vedānta schools to explain this state. This led gradually to a dilution of the concept itself by the time of the *Sāṁkhyapravāṇasūtra*. This paper deals with the way the change took place and how eventually the very concept of *jīvanmukti* as advocated by the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* got entangled in a web of verbiage in the later *Sāṁkhyapravāṇasūtra* and in the commentaries on it, that resulted in Sāṁkhya's inability to sustain the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* definition of *jīvanmukti* itself.

Let me first mention my reasons for choosing a topic in Sāṁkhya philosophy in a volume dedicated to Professor Larson called *Theory and Practice of Yoga*. I address the problem of *jīvanmukti* in Sāṁkhya for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I wanted to select a topic which is of prime importance in Sāṁkhya philosophy itself, as it is Sāṁkhya philosophy that Larson so totally and passionately identifies himself with. And secondly, the understanding of *jīvanmukti* in Sāṁkhya is so dependent on Yoga and can, therefore, very well fit into a volume that deals with topics in the field of Yoga. Commentators on the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* were hard pressed to explain satisfactorily the Sāṁkhya-*jīvanmukti*-concept, solely from what is said so cryptically in the *Sāṁkhyakārikā*. It was thus natural for Sāṁkhya to lean on Yoga for this task which is evident even in Vācaspati Miśra's *Tattvakaumudī*. That, in due course, led the *Sāṁkhyasūtra* commentators, to ultimately succumb to the model given in the *Yogasūtra*, so much so that, eventually, it became difficult to distinguish *Sāṁkhyasūtra jīvanmukti* from the Yoga *jīvanmukti* concept itself. It, thus, fits into the general Yoga theme of this volume.

I had occasion to talk about *jīvanmukti* in the context of Sāṃkhya in one of my earlier papers.¹ I had then pointed out that Sāṃkhya had no guidance or methodology for attaining this state and even Vācaspati Miśra in his Sāṃkhya commentary resorts to the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* for help.² The purpose of this paper is to continue the discussion of *jīvanmukti* and explore how the later Sāṃkhya texts further their understanding of this concept. With the end of the reign of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* with its commentaries, we are in the age of the *Tattvasamāśasūtra*, its commentaries and in particular the *Sāṃkhyasūtra* (SS), which gives a direction and seems to dominate the discourse from this period onwards. I shall be looking at the changing hermeneutics of understanding the concept of *jīvanmukti* within the Sāṃkhya philosophy, and will mainly use the *Sāṃkhyapraśāsanāsūtra*, with some of its commentaries, in order to examine how these later commentators negotiate this concept. But before that exercise it is good to call our attention to some general principles that define the works of this period.

There are some points, in general, that we have to bear in mind with reference to Indian philosophical *sūtra*-s and commentaries on them, that have a direct impact on their understanding. Elliot Deutsch in *Interpreting Across Boundaries* remarks that the idea of philosophy in traditional Indian understanding is 'recovery' rather than 'discovery'.³ Ninian Smart had also made a similar remark in his *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* calling attention to the fact that 'Indian philosophy is on the whole markedly *traditional*' and 'the roots of the different viewpoints and schools usually go back a long way, sometimes to disappear into the recesses of unknown antiquity'.⁴ Kunjunni Raja echoes this when he says: 'But often the attempt of scholars [which includes commentators] was not to reconstruct the text as the author intended it to be, but rather to decide the best version or the one the writer should have written.'⁵ Thus all these scholars point out that the attempts of later commentators within a *saṃpradāya*

¹ 'Sāṃkhya And Yoga: Where They Do Not Speak in One Voice,' in *Asiatische Studien* LIII.3.1999.

² Ibid.

³ *Interpreting Across Boundaries*, p. 169.

⁴ *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, p. 125.

⁵ 'Textual Studies and Editorial Problems in Theory and Practice,' in *Annals of Oriental Research*, University of Madras, 1976, Vol. XXVI. Parts I & II, pp. 1-10.

(school) is still within the tradition or 'tradition text'. Deutsch further elaborates on what he means by 'tradition text' in the following way:⁶

The exegetical material expands, refines, modifies arguments and ideas, and presents new ones, usually with increasing precision, . . . seeking to bring greater systematic coherence to a body of ideas. The philosopher-commentator, in other words, seeks to remain faithful to his authoritative sources, but in his own creative terms. It is thus that we can speak of his work, together with its authoritative sources, as constituting a 'tradition text'.

Needless to add that there is a great deal of truth in this observation. The later commentators are always within a *saṃpradāya* and the hermeneutics is always a 'constructed' one, to fit into the broad ontology and epistemology of the *saṃpradāya* within which the commentator is working.

Another point to note is that Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta had become the dominant philosophical school in India from the eighth century of the Common Era. Practically all commentators, after this period, have a tendency to use Advaita vocabulary and this is increasingly evident in the commentators of the Sāṃkhya school, perhaps due to the fact that Sāṃkhya epistemology and ontology lends itself easily to the borrowing of Advaita ideas, in spite of Sāṃkhya being of a dualistic nature. There must have been a period in the early beginnings of the systematization of Vedānta, when Sāṃkhya was a real threat to Vedānta, as is evidenced in the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. But now the tables are turned and it is Advaita that is the dominant system and Sāṃkhya exhibits a tendency to use both the vocabulary and the conceptual framework, as far as is feasible, to explain its own philosophical ideas.

For example, in later Sāṃkhya commentarial literature we find *puruṣa* very often being substituted by the use of the word *brahman*,⁷ there is an attempt to explain the Sāṃkhyan reflection theory in terms of *adhyāsa*,⁸ *puruṣa* is also described as of the nature of *nityabuddhamuktasvarūpa*,⁹ the words *susupti*, *saṃādhi* and *mokṣa* are discussed

⁶ Eliot Deutsch, *op. cit.* p. 170.

⁷ SS. 5.116.

⁸ SS. 2.5.

⁹ SS. 1.19.

as if they are equivalents,¹⁰ the rope/snake analogy is used to indicate that the false snake ceases to affect the awakened,¹¹ *puruṣa* is described as being the witness of the dreamless state,¹² etc. Another feature to be noted in this group of commentarial works, is their proximity to Yoga vocabulary and ideas. Even though Sāṃkhya and Yoga could have had separate origins, Sāṃkhya-Yoga is now looked upon as a cognate unit and there is no attempt to strictly or conscientiously stick to the respective vocabularies in both Yoga and Sāṃkhya. Thus Sāṃkhya, for instance, freely talks about *asaṃprajñāta-yoga* as if it is very much part of its system. *Mokṣa* and *kaivalya* are no more distinguished.¹³ The SS have accepted liberation to mean either the liberation of *puruṣa* or the *guṇa*-s going back to their original state¹⁴ which was, then, given prominence by later commentators like Vijñānabhikṣu (Bhikṣu).¹⁵ This is the way that the *Yogasūtra* (YS) defines *kaivalya* in 4.34 but that is not the way Sāṃkhya *apavarga* was explained in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (SK), as is well known.

These various aspects of later Sāṃkhya come out clearly in the way *jīvanmukti* is discussed in the SS. *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* (EIP), Vol. IV on Sāṃkhya characterizes one of the representations of later Sāṃkhya, as the Sūtra-Sāṃkhya tradition.¹⁶ It also adds that one of the reasons for such a compilation could be a dissatisfaction with the summary dealing of Sāṃkhya in the *Tattvakaumudī*.¹⁷ Vācaspati Miśra himself may not be at fault here as some of the topics dealt with in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, especially the ones dealing with *jīvanmukti*, are not at all helpful and do not give us a handle on the exact means to be adopted for liberation. That is the reason Vācaspati Miśra depended on the *Yogasūtra* and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* for some help in this direction.¹⁸ In the SS and the commentaries on them there

¹⁰ SS. 5.116.

¹¹ SS. 3.66.

¹² SS. 1.148 and 161.

¹³ SS. 1.5.7; 2.1.

¹⁴ SS. 2.1.

¹⁵ Bhikṣu, *Yogavārttika* under YS. 4.34. See also T. S. Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu*, Vol. IV. pp. 139–142.

¹⁶ *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, pp. 35–41.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 317.

¹⁸ *uktaṇprakāratattvaviśayajñānābhyāsād ādaranāirantaryadīrghakālasevitāt, Tattvakaumudī* on SK. 64. Cf. *sa tu dīrghakālanairantaryasatkārāsevito dīrghabhūmih*, YS. 1.14 and *dīrghakālā „sevito niranantarā“ sevitaḥ . . . dīrghabhūmīrbhāvati, Vyāsabhāṣya* on YS. 1.14.

is no more pretension of Sāṁkhya following an exclusive definition of what liberation stands for and what the means to liberation are. The SS now openly talks a language of Yoga and also boldly takes the risk of blurring the boundaries between *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*. My attempt here is to study the relevant *sūtra*-s on *jīvanmukti* in the SS, along with some commentaries, and demonstrate how Sāṁkhya cannot maintain its hold on *jīvanmukti* and may even have to abandon the concept altogether, if we strictly follow these later commentaries.

We know that the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* only mention knowledge of the manifest (*vyakta*), unmanifest (*avyakta*) and the knower (*jñā*), as its concept of freedom from misery.¹⁹ Similarly the word for liberation is *kaivalya* in *Kārikā* 17 and 19.²⁰ The means to this *kaivalya*²¹ is *tattvābhyāsa* or repeated reflection/study of the nature of the principles²² or *samyagjñāna*.²³ Though the idea of *jīvanmukti* is there in the SK,²⁴ the word itself is not used anywhere in the *Kārikā*. The means to *kaivalya* is always stressed by the pre-SS commentators, like Gauḍapāda and Vācaspati Miśra for instance, as continuous and intense pursuit of the path of discriminating between what is real and what is unreal. While Vācaspati Miśra does depend on Yoga vocabulary for explaining the means to *kaivalya*, there is no mixing up of the categories of *saṁprajñāta-yoga*/*asaṁprajñāta-yoga* with *kaivalya*. In other words, there is nowhere a suggestion of equating the Yoga *asaṁprajñāta-samādhi* with the Sāṁkhya *kaivalya*. The boundaries are strictly maintained and it is clear that Yoga has a two stage *samādhi* structure which does not apply to the *Kārikā*-Sāṁkhya and there is no blurring of distinctions. It is an altogether different story when we approach the Sāṁkhyasūtra-Sāṁkhya and its commentarial literature.

SS 3.71 begins a discussion on what constitutes bondage/release of *puruṣa* which is declared to be due to *aviveka* (non-discrimination).²⁵ SS 3.75 states that by repeated cultivation of discrimination between what is true and what is false, perfect *viveka* or insight can take place.²⁶

¹⁹ SK. 2.

²⁰ SK. 17 and 19.

²¹ SK. 23.

²² SK. 64.

²³ SK. 67.

²⁴ SS. 3.71.

²⁵ SS. 3.75.

²⁶ *tattvābhyāsānneti netīti tyāgādvivekasiddhiḥ*.

Aniruddha's *ṛtti* (*Ṛtti*) and Vijñānabhikṣu's *bhāṣya* (*Bhāṣya*) anticipate the *pūrvapakṣin* (an opponent) raising the objection that, in this case, it is possible to predict that everyone will be able to gain liberation, since the cultivation of this mental exercise is possible in every case and consider SS 3.76 an answer to that objection.²⁷ SS. 3.76 thus states: 'Due to the difference in competence of the *adhikārin* (aspirant), this is not the rule'²⁸ i.e. it is not the case, therefore, that everyone of the disciples will attain perfect *viveka* or *jīvanmukti* in this life itself. And continuing on the same lines the next *sūtra* draws a distinction between a medium (average) and a superior *adhikārin* (aspirant), by saying that there is the return of experience in the case of an average *adhikārin*.²⁹

SS. 3.77, talks about the experience due to *prārabdhakarma* (*karma* that has begun yielding result in this life), in the case of a *madhyama-adhikārin* or *adhikārin* of medium discrimination. As such a one is considered to be a *jīvanmukta* and is so declared in SS. 3.78, it raises a number of questions. In fact different commentators express their understanding of who a *madhyama-adhikārin* is, and thus one realizes that there is no uniform opinion in this respect. Aniruddha clearly states that for a *tīrvavivekī* (one possessing intense discrimination, same as *uttamādhikārin*) there is no experience and only a *madhyavivekī* has the experience due to the return of previous *vāsanā* (i.e. *prārabdhakarma*).³⁰ For Bhikṣu, the *madhyama-adhikārin* is one who has reached the stage of *saṃprajñāta-samādhi* just once.³¹ We know from the *Yogasūtra*³² and Bhikṣu's own *Yogavārttika*³³ that *saṃprajñāta samādhi* has

²⁷ (a) *yadi tattvābhyāsādīnā mokṣaḥ, upadeśānantaram sarvaśiṣyānāṃ muktih syāt, abhyāsaṣya tulyatvāt; ityāha adhikāriprabhedāt na niyamaḥ- Ṛtti on SS. 3.75.*

(b) *mandādyadhikāribhedasattvādabhyāse kriyamāṇe pyasminneva janmani vivekanispattirbhavati niyamo nāstītyarthaḥ. ata uttamādhikāramabhyāsapāṭavenātmanah saṃpādayediti bhāvaḥ- vivekanispattyaiva nistāro nānyathetyāha- Bhāṣya on SS. 3.76.*

²⁸ *adhikāriprabhedāt na niyamaḥ- SS. 3.76*

uttamamadhyamādhamaśaktibhedāt ekadā iti na niyamaḥ- Ṛtti on 3.76.

²⁹ *bādhītānuvṛtyā madhyavivekato'pyupabhogah SS. 3.77. Aniruddha has bādhītānuvṛtteḥ instead of bādhītānuvṛtyā.*

³⁰ *tīrvavivekasya upabhogah na asti. madhyavivekasya api upabhogah, rāgābhāvāt alam iti jñānena bādhītattvāt vāsanā'nuvṛttimātram. upārūdhaphalam karma upabhogāt kṣīṇomi iti upabhuṅkte iti- Ṛtti on SS. 3.77.*

³¹ *sakṛt saṃprajñātayogenātmasākṣātkārottaram madhyavivekāvasthe madhyamaviveke'pi sati puruṣe bādhītānāmapi duḥkhādīnāṃ prārabdhavaśāt pratibimbārūpeṇa puruṣe'nuvṛtyā bhogo bhavātītyarthaḥ- Bhāṣya on SS. 3.77.*

³² *YS. 1.50–51.*

³³ *Rukmani op.cit. Vol. I. pp. 251–58.*

to occur repeatedly and increase the *prajñā-saṁskāras* (subliminal impressions of insight), in order then to lead to *asaṁprajñāta* and *kaivalya*. So what Bhikṣu is hinting at here is that the *madhyama adbhikārin* has had a taste of what *kaivalya* is but has still not attained complete discrimination and he has a long way to go. But the anomaly here is to introduce the Yoga twofold distinction of *saṁprajñāta* and *asaṁprajñāta* into a commentary on the SS, i.e. a Sāṁkhya text, which does not subscribe to any Yoga, whether *saṁprajñāta* or *asaṁprajñāta*. If we go back to SS 3.77, Bhikṣu's *bhāṣya* draws a clear cut division between *saṁprajñāta*yoga and *asaṁprajñāta*yoga and it is mentioned that only in *asaṁprajñāta*yoga is discrimination attained completely and thus liberation also is effected only in the *asaṁprajñāta* state.³⁴ This is a distortion of the Sāṁkhya *kaivalya*. There is no measuring of Sāṁkhya-*kaivalya* by the attainment of *saṁprajñāta* or *asaṁprajñāta*yoga simply because SK has not laid down such stages in its development. By borrowing the vocabulary of Yoga there is confusion created in one's mind.

It is not only the vocabulary that creates this confusion; it is also what words themselves denote. Thus I have argued elsewhere that Sāṁkhya, though appearing to support an ontic view of *jīvanmukti*, can only be designated as an epistemic one till the disembodied state.³⁵ But the limitation is only due to the body as far as the SK goes. I have also argued that Yoga's concept of *jīvanmukti* is very difficult to sustain especially because of the two stages of *saṁprajñāta* and *asaṁprajñāta* yoga.³⁶ Now, in the SS and its commentaries, we find that the difference between *viveka* and *asaṁprajñāta* *saṁādhi* is completely obliterated. But if *asaṁprajñāta* *saṁādhi* is alone *viveka* all other states including *saṁprajñāta* has to be *aviveka* and less than *kaivalya* or liberation. This is precisely what is taking place in the Sūtra-Sāṁkhya and in the commentaries on it.

A *madhyamavivekī* is not an *uttamavivekī*. An *uttamavivekī* or superior aspirant is superior to a *madhyamavivekī*. If the *madhyamavivekī* is a *jīvanmukta* (liberated while still in the body), then the *uttamavivekī* has to

³⁴ *vivekanīṣṭhāpārādhānādasāṁprajñātādeva bhavātīyatatasyāṁ satyāṁ na bhogo'stīti pratīpādayitum madhyamavivekata ityuktam- Bhāṣya on SS. 3.77.*

³⁵ 'Jīvanmukti in Sāṁkhya-Yoga: Is it Ontic or Epistemic' in *Quest for Excellence*, pp. 148–153.

³⁶ 'Dharmameghasamādhi: A Critique' (unpublished paper, read at T. R. V. Murthy Birth Centenary International Conference, Varanasi, 2002).

be superior to a *jīvanmukta* by the very semantic understanding of the word *uttama* (superior). But then a state superior to *jīvanmukta* can only be *videhamukta* (liberated after the fall of the body) and so the *bhāṣya* is led by its own logic to conclude that *kaivalya/mukti* is only a disembodied state and that *jīvanmukta* is only used euphemistically for one who, though superior to an inferior aspirant, is inferior to the superior *vivekī*.

Śrī Vedāntin Mahādeva (Mahādeva) is probably closer to the original idea when he says, in his commentary, the *Vṛttisāra* on SS 3.77, that a *madhyavivekī* or *madhyatva* is ‘containing the residuum of *prārabdhakarma*, which is an obstruction to the attainment of *videhamukti*’.³⁷ It is also significant that Mahādeva does not elaborate on the degree of competency of the aspirants as does Aniruddha and Bhikṣu.

So what has happened to the *jīvanmukta* that the SK so emphatically proclaims in *Kārikā* 3, and *Kārikās* 64–67. It has fallen by the wayside in the enthusiasm of the commentators to rescue Sāṃkhya through the popular Yoga imagery. Commentaries on the *Kārikā-Sāṃkhya* like that of Vācaspati Miśra or Gauḍapāda have also failed to provide a justification of the concept of *jīvanmukti*, leaving it vague and thus making it vulnerable to later distortions.

Let us now look at the next *sūtra* i.e. SS. 3.78, which reads as *jīvanmuktaśca*. The *ca*, in the *sūtra*, is understood as *iva* (like) by Aniruddha³⁸ and as *api* (also) by Bhikṣu.³⁹ Aniruddha thus says that ‘the *madhyavivekin* is like a *jīvanmukta*’ and adds that ‘he is like a released one, due to absence of attachment and non-arising of *dharma*’.⁴⁰ Bhikṣu, on the other hand, mentions that the *jīvanmukta* is also, only at the stage of *madhyaviveka* (*madhyavivekāvasthaḥ*) and thus, according to him, the *jīvanmukta* is only a *madhyama-adhikārin*. It is understood that this *sūtra* is still dealing with a *madhyama-adhikārin* i.e. there is *anuvṛtti* (understanding) of the word *madhyavivekī* as being part of this *sūtra* from the previous *sūtra*.⁴¹ Mahādeva, Vijñānabhikṣu, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa

³⁷ *madhyatvam nāma videhamuktipratibandhakaprārabdhaśeṣavattvam. tadvato vivekāt upabhoge’pītyanvayaḥ. rāga dveṣābhāvād bādhitasya harṣaviṣādayoraprayojakasya kāmānutpādakasyāpyanuvṛttyā prārabdhakarmaphalatvenāvaśyakatayā- Vṛttisāra on SS. 3.77.*

³⁸ *mukta iva muktaḥ- Vṛtti on SS. 3.78.*

³⁹ *jīvanmukto’pi madhyavivekāvastha eva bhavatītyarthaḥ- Bhāṣya on SS. 3.78.*

⁴⁰ *rāga bhāvāt dharmānutpatteśca- Vṛtti on SS. 3.77.*

⁴¹ *madhyavivekinaḥ svarūpamāha- Vṛtti, Introduction to SS. 3.78.*

all agree that a *madhyavivekī* is a *jīvanmukta*.⁴² They do not engage themselves with the implied hierarchy of an *uttamavivekī*, indicated by SS. 3.77. The question of reconciling the concept of *jīvanmukta* with that of *videhamukta* is left vague. The only answer we get from the different commentaries is that the *madhyavivekī* is subject to *prārabdhakarma* and therefore is a *madhyavivekī* while an *uttamādhikārin* is one who has shed the body and is beyond the *prārabdhasaṃskāra*-s. Then the question that comes to mind is ‘why call him an *uttamādhikārin* in the first place?’ The tension between a *madhyavivekī*, a *jīvanmukta* and an *uttamādhikārin* is left without any resolution in this set of *sūtra*-s.

The debate now shifts to the necessity of arguing for the existence of a *jīvanmukta* in the first place. We are used to descriptions of who an enlightened person or *jīvanmukta* is, right from the time of the *Upaniṣad*-s, through the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* etc., etc. But the SS is not describing him. On the other hand, it is citing reasons as to why one should believe in the existence of a *jīvanmukta*. Unlike Śaṅkarācārya who just wants us to trust someone who says that he has realized *Brahman* and yet holds the body,⁴³ the SS is more concerned with convincing people that a *jīvanmukta* exists and can be recognized in the world. One wonders why the SS wants to indulge in this exercise. Could this indicate a shift in the attitude of the people at large who are not so willing to accept the concept of *jīvanmukti* at its face value? This also brings to mind the question of Arjuna to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā* in the second chapter, asking him about the characteristics of a *sthitaṭṭvā*.

In the six *sūtra*-s, SS 3.79–84, some interesting arguments are presented to persuade one for the existence of a *jīvanmukta* in the world. Introducing SS 2.79 Aniruddha says that there is no proof of one liberated while living⁴⁴ and in answer comes the *sūtra* which states ‘It (*jīvanmukta*) is established due to the relation of instructed and

⁴² (a) *madhyavivekinaḥ svarūpamāha- jīvanmukta iti*, Mahādeva’s *Vṛttisāra* under SS. 3.78.

(b) *jīvanmukto’pi madhyavivekakāla evetyarthaḥ*, Nageśabhaṭṭa’s *Sāṃkhyasūtravṛtti* on SS. 3.78.

(c) See also note 39 above for Bhikṣu’s *Bhāṣya* on SS. 3.78.

⁴³ *apīca naivātra vivaditavyaṃ brahmavidā kaṃcitkālaṃ śarīraṃ dhṛiyate na vā dhṛiyate iti. kathaṃ hyekasya svahrdayapratyayaṃ brahmavedanaṃ dehadhāraṇaṃ cāpareṇa pratikṣeptuṃ śakyeta. Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* 4.1.15.

⁴⁴ (a) *jīvataḥ muktiḥ iti anupapattieḥ*, *Vṛtti* Introduction to SS. 3.79.

(b) *jīvanmukte pramāṇamāha*, *Bhāṣya* Introduction to SS. 3.79.

instructor'.⁴⁵ Since all the commentators link *jīvanmukta* with the *madhyavivekī* we understand that the *madhyavivekī* is understood in this *sūtra*. We learn that a *jīvanmukta*, is an instructor of this highest knowledge and is still only a *madhyavivekī*. In other words, the reasons in this set of *sūtra*-s are not only to prove the existence of a *jīvanmukta* but also to confirm that only a *madhyavivekī* can be an instructor of this knowledge. In order to make this idea clear Aniruddha states that, the *tīrvavivekī* (another synonym for *uttamādhikārin* or superior aspirant), is not interested (*asaṃvedinaḥ*) with the external world and so he cannot have the role of an instructor.⁴⁶ As for the inferior aspirant, he cannot be an instructor because his insight is dull (*mandavivekinaḥ*) and so he is only fit to be instructed (*upadeśyaḥ*).⁴⁷ The argument presented is that only the middling aspirant can be an instructor; therefore there is proof of the existence of the *jīvanmukta*.⁴⁸ If one examines this argument it is clear that there is the defect of mutual dependency (*anyonyāśrayabhāva*) between *madhyavivekī* and *jīvanmukta*. But in a tradition which accepts and believes strongly in the concept of a *jīvanmukta*, this will not be much of a problem. Thus the argument that only a living *jīvanmukta* can be the instructor of the highest knowledge of insight and not a disembodied superior *vivekī* (*uttamavivekī*) or, for that matter, an inferior *vivekī*, is sufficient proof for the living *jīvanmukta* who, logically then, can only be a *madhyavivekī*. Bhikṣu is brief and just states, under this *sūtra*, that only a *jīvanmukta* can be an instructor.⁴⁹ Mahādeva goes further and mentions that there is proof for a *jīvanmukta* being the instructor of a *mandavivekī*.⁵⁰

The next *sūtra* adds that there is proof (for the existence of a *jīvanmukta*) in *śruti* as well.⁵¹ Both Aniruddha and Bhikṣu quote verses from sacred texts to support the *sūtra*. SS. 3.81 changes track and suggests that otherwise, i.e. in the absence of *jīvanmukta*-s as instructors, there would be the spectacle of the blind leading the blind

⁴⁵ *upadeśyopadeśyrtvāt tatsiddhiḥ*, SS. 3.79.

⁴⁶ *tīrvavivekinaḥ bāhyāsaṃvedinaḥ upadeśyrtvam eva na asti*, *Vṛtti* on SS. 3.79.

⁴⁷ *mandavivekinaḥ api ajñānāt na upadeśyrtvam, kiṃtu saḥ upadeśyaḥ*, *ibid*.

⁴⁸ *upadeśtā madhyavivekī. ataḥ tatsiddhiḥ jīvanmuktasiddhiḥ*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹ *jīvanmuktasyaivopadeśyrtvasambhavadīti*, *Bhāṣya* on SS. 3.79.

⁵⁰ *mandavivekī tūpadeśyaḥ, tathā ca tadupadeśyrtvājīvanmuktisiddhiḥ*, *Vṛttisāra* under SS. 3.79.

⁵¹ *śrutiśca*, SS. 3.80.

(*andhaparamparā*).⁵² *Sūtra* 3.82 repeats the standard reason for a *jīvanmukta* still staying in the body as due to the force of *prārabdhakarma*, which is like the rotation of a potter's wheel even after the potter has removed the whirling rod. This *sūtra* is followed by an explanation for the retention of the body and thus the justification for the existence of a *jīvanmukta*.

Sūtra 3.83 is significant as the commentators are not agreed on its implication. The *sūtra* states that there is the presence of the body in one who is a *jīvanmukta*, because of a trace of *saṃskāra*.⁵³ The emphasis, here, is not the standard one of just the momentum of the residual *prārabdhakarmasaṃskāra* that results in the retention of the body. This *sūtra*'s connection to *saṃskāra*, compels commentators, like Bhikṣu, to take the help of the YS for an explanation. But here there is a catch. Unlike Advaita Vedānta, Yoga does not allow the persistence of a trace of *avidyā* after attainment of *ṛtambharā-prajñā*, the highest stage of *saṃprajñāta-samādhi*.⁵⁴ In Yoga, the modifications have to be totally abolished before *prajñā* comes into being. Therefore the belief in the existence of the body of a *jīvanmukta* presents a challenge to the commentators.

Aniruddha simply does not enter the debate at all and leaves the question unanswered. In his *vṛtti* he just states 'Thus there is the *jīvanmukta*'.⁵⁵ Bhikṣu repeats generally, whatever he says in the *Yogavārttika*.⁵⁶ I have dealt with this unsustainability of the *jīvanmukta* concept in Yoga in a couple of my papers, and therefore will not repeat them here.⁵⁷ In summary, Bhikṣu just says that, since there is a residue of a trace of *saṃskāra* of objects which are the cause for the existence of the body, that establishes the retention of the body.⁵⁸ As is obvious, this explanation is far from satisfactory and leaves a lot of points unexplained.

⁵² *ītarathā andhaparamparā*, 3.81.

⁵³ *saṃskāralesātatsiddhiḥ*, 3.83.

⁵⁴ See *Yogasūtra* 1.50 and 51 and the *Vyāsaśāstra*. Also see Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vyāsanabhikṣu*, Vol. I, pp. 251–264.

⁵⁵ *tasmāt asti jīvanmuktaḥ, iti āha*—Introduction to 3.83.

⁵⁶ See *Yogasūtra*, IV. 11 and *Vyāsaśāstra*. Also see Rukmani, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 37–40.

⁵⁷ 'Tension between *Vyutthāna* and *Nirodha* in the *Yoga-Sūtras*,' in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 25: pp. 613–628, 1997 and 'Dharmameghasamādhi in the *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali: A Critique' (unpublished paper).

⁵⁸ *śarīradhāraṇahetavo ye viśayasamāskārasteṣāmalpāvaśeṣād tasya śarīradhāraṇasya siddhirityarthah*, *Bhāṣya* under 3.83.

Mahādeva's commentary is also of not much use. He translates *saṃskāra* as *saṃskāra* of desire etc., and its trace as a semblance of desire etc., and then says that from that there is proof of experience (*upabhogasiddhi*). According to him, even when one sees experience like desire etc., in those who have insight (*vivekinaḥ*), they are not in reality desire etc., but only a semblance of desire etc. (*ragādyābhāsa eveti*).⁵⁹

SS 3.84 is probably the best answer as to who a *jīvanmukta* is. It states that 'when there is cessation of pain totally, due to insight (*vivekāḥ*), what has to be accomplished has been done, not otherwise'.⁶⁰ One can possibly agree that it is within reason to believe that one can attain to such a state of insight, and that is what a *jīvanmukta* possibly stands for. What is possible to experience and to be as Śaṅkarācārya so eloquently proclaimed in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*,⁶¹ need not necessarily be subject to a theoretical explanation. Using the traditional example, one can ask 'how does one explain the sweetness of sugarcane-juice to one who has not tasted it'? It exists surely but can only be experienced.

To summarize, we can state that SS has in no way helped to advance our understanding of the Sāṃkhya *jīvanmukti* ideal. SS 3.75 states clearly that, by constant cultivation of the habit of distinguishing the self from the body, senses (*indriya*) etc., there is attainment of insight (*viveka*).⁶² This is exactly what the SK has explained when it mentions that through repeated reflection on the principles (*tattva*-s) there arises pure knowledge.⁶³ The SS, introduces a hypothetical, farfetched objection that, in that case, everyone will attain liberation. This argument is advanced not just in the third *adhyāya* (chapter) but is first introduced in the first *adhyāya*⁶⁴ and then repeated in the sixth *adhyāya*⁶⁵ also, using the very same reasoning.⁶⁶ Based

⁵⁹ *saṃskāro rāgādīnām sa eva leśo rāgādyābhāsa ityarthah. tatastatsiddhiḥ upabhogasiddhiḥ. ata eva vivekinām rāgādidarśane'pi na tadrāgādi kiṃtu rāgādyābhāsa eveti bhāvah. Vṛttisāra on 3.83.*

⁶⁰ *vivekānniḥśeṣaduḥkhanivṛtttau kṛtakṛtyatā netarānmetarāt*, SS. 3.84. Aniruddha has *kṛtakṛtyo* instead of *kṛtakṛtyatā*.

⁶¹ See note 43 above.

⁶² *tattvābhyāsānneti netīti tyāgādvivekasiddhiḥ* SS. 3.75.

⁶³ *evam tattvābhyāsānnā'smi na me nā'hamityaparīṣeṣam, aviparyayādvīsuddham kevalamud-padyate jñānam*, SK. 64.

⁶⁴ *adhikāritraividyānna niyamaḥ*, SS. 1.70.

⁶⁵ SS. 6.22 is exactly the same as 1.70.

⁶⁶ (a) *nanvevaṃ cet prakṛtipuruṣādyanumānaprakāro'sti, tarhi sarveṣāmeva katham viveka-mananam na jāyate, tatrāha- adhikāri . . .* Bhāṣya Introducing SS. 1.70.

on that hypothesis, it classifies the aspirants as inferior, middling and intense in order to overcome that hypothesis. Up until this point there is no difficulty as this position can still be reconciled to the Sāṃkhya view, since it is the standard argument in all works, dealing with liberation (*mokṣa-grantha-s*), that only an intense practice of the relevant means i.e. cultivating the habit of insight, will produce the result.

But SS got sidetracked when it started to describe in detail the three kinds of aspirants, not with reference to the means of insight alone, but in terms of examples of such individuals existing in the world and in terms of their experience. If we compare the YS, we find that in *sūtra-s* I. 12–14,⁶⁷ and I. 21–22,⁶⁸ there is a classification of the aspirants, but it is done within the context of the practice of the means to liberation. But the moment the SS tried to link *prārabdhakarma* experience (*upabhoga*) to imperfect experience (*madhyaviveka*), it was caught in its own web of verbosity. *Prārabdhakarma* of a *jīvanmukta* was explained by both the SK⁶⁹ and Advaita Vedānta⁷⁰ as exhausting the momentum of the life begun, which cannot be interrupted, and has to run its course. It may be the obvious reason for continuing experience in the world but that was not stressed, and it was in no way the cause for experience (*upabhoga*) of one who has not attained true liberation, for *jīvanmukti* in Sāṃkhya as in Advaita Vedānta, is true liberation. The distinction drawn between *kaivalya* in truth and imperfect experience of the other, leads the SS to call a middling aspirant as a *jīvanmukta* and to completely distort what the SK says regarding a *jīvanmukta*. The superior aspirant (*uttamaviveki*) is constantly in view in these *sūtra-s*,⁷¹ and the *videhamukta* is

(b) *nanvantarāyadhvaṃsamātram cennuktistarhi śravaṇamātreṇaiva tatsiddhiḥ syāt, ajñānapratibaddhakaṇṭhacāmīkarasiddhivaditi, tatrāha- adhikāri . . .* Bhāṣya Introducing SS. 6.22.

⁶⁷ *abhyāsavairāgyābhyāṃ tannirodhaḥ; tatra sthitau yatno'bhyāsaḥ; sa tu dīrghakālanairantaryasatkārāsevito dṛḍhabhūmiḥ*; YS. 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14. See also Rukmani, *op. cit.* Vol. I. pp. 91–96.

⁶⁸ *tīvrasaṃvegānāmāsannaḥ; mṛdumadhyādhimātratratvātato'pi viśeṣaḥ*; YS. 1.21 and 1.22

See also Rukmani, *op. cit.* Vol. I. pp. 120–23.

⁶⁹ *samyagjñānādhigamāddharmādināmakaraṇaprāptaū, tiṣṭhati saṃskāraśāccakrabhramavad-dhṛtaśarīraḥ*. SK. 67.

⁷⁰ *āśrite ca tasminkulālacakravatpravṛttavegasyāntarāle pratibandhāsaṃbhavādbbhavati vegakṣayapratipālanam. Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* under BS. 4.1.15.

⁷¹ SS. 75–84.

described as the only stage when one is fulfilled. Commentators like Bhikṣu also state, specifically, that *jīvanmukti* (liberation while embodied) is inferior to *videhamukti* (*netarājīvanmuktyāderapītyarthaḥ*),⁷² and, therefore, one can only draw the obvious conclusion that SS cannot sustain the concept of *jīvanmukti* originally advocated by the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*.

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⁷² (a) *uktāyā vivekasiddhitaḥ paravairāgyadvārā sarvavṛttinirodhena yadā niḥśeṣato bādhitābādhitāsādhāranyenākḥiladuḥkham nivatṛtate tadaiva puruṣaḥ kṛtakṛtyo bhavati. netarājīvanmuktyāderapītyarthaḥ, Bhāṣya on SS. 3.84.*

(b) *uktāyāḥ vivekasiddheḥ paravairāgye sati dehapātānantaram viśeṣataḥ sthūlasūkṣmākḥiladuḥkhanāvṛttau puruṣaḥ kṛtakṛtyo bhavati netarājīvanmuktyāderapītyarthaḥ Sāṃkhyasūtravṛtti on SS. 3.84.*

BEING A WITNESS: CROSS-EXAMINING THE NOTION
OF SELF IN ŚAṆKARA'S *UPADEŚASĀHASRĪ*,
ĪŚVARAKRṢṢṆA'S *SĀṆKHYAKĀRIKĀ*,
AND PATAÑJALI'S *YOGASŪTRA**

Richa Pauranik Clements

Abstract

This study compares the notion of Self in three independent treatises belonging to the three most influential schools of 'Hindu' philosophy: Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī* (Advaita Vedānta), Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṅkhyakārikā* (Sāṅkhya) and Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (Yoga). Behind their different metaphysics—non-dualistic, dualistic, and dualistic with an element of theism—lie striking conceptual and linguistic similarities in the writings on causality (*pariṇāmavāda* and *satkāryavāda*), the functioning of an individual's inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*) and its modifications (*vṛtti-s* or *pratyaya-s*), and the pure witness-consciousness (*sākṣitva*) of Self. Radical Oneness of the Self is the spiritual goal common to all three schools, and none considers God's existence essential or even necessary to achieving it. The only difference is in the interpretation of the oneness of Self, viewed as an integrated Ātman-Brahman by Advaita Vedānta, and as dis-integrated isolation of individual *puruṣa-s* by Sāṅkhya-Yoga. In either case, the Self remains a witness.

In India, traditionally, an enquiry and insight (*darśana*) into the nature of reality was at the same time a study of the human condition, because philosophizing directly and practically impacted the inquiring subject's life and destiny. Philosophy was not only an intellectual pursuit involving logic, but also a personal, spiritual quest leading to an experiential knowledge of the reality of the world, oneself or one's Self, and perhaps another entity called God. Understanding the interrelationships between all these elements of metaphysical reality and shaping one's vision of sin and salvation accordingly is, in sum, grasping the human condition. The knowledge quest therefore begins in the human realm with an examination of the status of Self.

* This paper is dedicated to Professor Gerald James Larson, my *Doktorvater*. From him I have learned about Indian philosophies and religions, both ancient and modern.

This paper explores the concept of Self in three philosophical texts, namely, Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī* (ca. eighth century C.E.; US), Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (ca. 350–450 C.E.; SK), and Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (ca. third to fourth century C.E.; YS), and notes textual and conceptual (dis-)similarities of the notion of Self in these texts.¹ It also asks the question regarding God: Do the concept(s) of Self and Ultimate Reality yield to (a-)theism in the *advaita* (Śaṅkara's non-dualistic Vedānta) and *dvaita* (dualistic Sāṃkhya-Yoga) philosophies?

On the matter of theism, S. G. Mudgal has observed that the Sāṃkhya of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* differs from the Sāṃkhya of the *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Gītā*, and the Epics.² Franklin Edgerton believes that Sāṃkhya is 'theistic throughout the epic passages' and that it 'differs from Yoga only in the sense that it emphasizes salvation by means of knowing rather than doing.'³ However, Gerald Larson points out that there are 'several passages [in the *Mahābhārata*] in which a *non-theistic* doctrine seems clearly implied.'⁴ Larson explains the way the question of theism or non-theism is handled in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* thus:

Salvation is the realization that the *puruṣa* or *kṣetrajña* is distinct or apart from *prakṛti* or essential material reality. *Īśvara*, if it exists at all, is considered to be a part of the material nature [the *kṣetra*, *prakṛti*] and thus is irrelevant from the point of view of salvation. In other words, the problem of salvation is viewed in non-theistic terms. Whether or not

¹ The dates mentioned are from Richard King's *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999) and are the most widely accepted. However, J. N. Mohanty, *Classical Indian Philosophy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), accepts the dates of ca. 200 C.E. for Īśvarakṛṣṇa, ca. second century C.E. for Patañjali, and, more specifically, 788–820 C.E. for Śaṅkara. Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana: A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), also dates Patañjali around second-third century C.E. All three texts are independent treatises, and not commentaries on other texts.

² Mudgal, S. G. *Advaita of Śaṅkara: A Reappraisal* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), 165.

³ In Gerald James Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998 [1969]), 125. Whicher also comes to similar conclusions in *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 51–52. Elsewhere he adds that 'the "nontheism" of classical Sāṃkhya, and "optional" theism of classical Yoga can be understood as deviations from a firmly established theistic base, reflected in the Upaniṣads' (336); optional devotion to *īśvara* is implied by the word *vā* (or) in YS I.23.

⁴ Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 125, original emphasis.

īśvara exists makes little difference. Only the knowledge or realization that the *puruṣa* or *kṣetrajña* is apart from all else including the *īśvara* can lead to salvation. . . . In *Kārikās* LIII [53] and LIV [54] the existence of the old Vedic gods is affirmed, but they are included on the side of *prakṛti*. No attempt is made to deny their existence.⁵

To sum, Larson says that ‘the classical Sāṃkhya recognizes no conscious Absolute or Creator God.’⁶

Whicher mentions the conventional understanding that classical Sāṃkhya is *nirīśvara* or ‘nontheistic’ and classical Yoga incorporates a *seśvara* or theistic stance, but points out that in Patañjali’s Yoga (1) *īśvara* is neither a creator God, nor the universal Absolute of Vedānta, and (2) *īśvara* ‘might have met primarily psychological and pedagogical needs rather than providing a purely ontological category.’⁷

In the context of Advaita Vedānta, J. N. Mohanty refers to the subject of gods while asking the question ‘Is Advaita Vedānta a religion [apart from being a philosophy]?’ and, if so, ‘what has it to do with the sacred?’⁸ His answer is that

Advaita Vedānta has no room for gods or deity, excepting as a provisional posit. It has no room for God except in the context of a (metaphysically) ignorant person’s inquiry about the cause of the universe which unknown to him is only an unreal appearance (and so is not in need of a creator). How then can the Advaita Vedāntin’s cultivation of self-knowledge (through the standardly accepted stages of *śravaṇa* [hearing, study], *manana* [reflection], and *nididhyāsana* [meditation]

⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁶ Ibid., 198. Creation, in Sāṃkhya-Yoga metaphysics, is brought about by *prakṛti*:
ity eṣa prakṛtikṛto
mahadādiviśeṣabhūtāparyantaḥ,
pratīpuruṣavimokṣārtham
svārtha iva parārtha ārambhah (SK 56)

Similarly, in the Vedānta *māyā* (illusion, God’s creative power) is the real material cause of the world, and an attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*) of *Brahman*, who only *appears* to be a creator-God (*vivarta kārana*). In the Sāṃkhya-Yoga too *puruṣa* is an immutable principle (*akartṛbhāva*). The difference between the two schools is that while in the Vedānta potential creative power (albeit illusorily) belongs to *māyā*-attributed *Brahman*, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga posits the creative potentiality and activity in intelligized *prakṛti*. Therefore, Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism led to the flowering of *devī bhakti*. For detailed discussion of the problem of existence of God in the philosophies, see Anima Sen Gupta’s *Classical Sāṃkhya: A Critical Study* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982), pp. 145 ff.

⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 83–85.

⁸ *Explorations in Philosophy: Essays by J. N. Mohanty*. Vol. I. Ed. Bina Gupta (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107.

culminating in an intuitive experience of the identity of the self and brahman) give rise to an experience of sacredness (and, sacredness of what?) so that it may be called a religion?

Mohanty believes that an Advaitin's experience is spiritual, not religious.⁹ Religious experience, according to Mohanty, is of 'faith, prayer, vision beautification; experience of the sacred and the holy, of the power that is above and beyond'. Spiritual experience, on the other hand, is a cognition, 'a knowledge, clear and distinct, immediate and intuitive, of the identity of the ātman and brahman,' resulting from the process of *sādhana* [spiritual discipline] consisting of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. He writes further that 'śravaṇa is hermeneutical, manana is philosophical, nididhyāsana is meditative. None is religious.' Mohanty concludes his investigation thus:

Mokṣa [liberation], the goal of this process, is not supernatural, otherworldly, soteriological. It is not salvation. It is discovery of the identity between the innermost truth of one's 'psyche' and the innermost being of the world: of psychology and physics. What is 'religious' about it?¹⁰

Sengaku Mayeda holds that 'Śaṅkara's central doctrine is *Ātman*'s identity with *Brahman* . . . [And] the knowledge of this truth is the means (*sādhana*) to final release.'¹¹ The quest for attainment of final release is considered the supreme objective of human life. *Mokṣa* is obtained by an experiential, and ultimately, intuitive realization of oneness of Being which is *Brahman*.

Insofar as an individual self comprehends Reality, it should be noted that 'All means of knowledge (pramāṇas) exist only as dependent on self-experience, and since such experience is its own proof, there is no necessity for proving the existence of self.'¹² Thus, the

⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁰ Cf. Eric Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 27–28, who traces back the roots of Vedānta's analogical method to 'the Vedic idea of the innate correspondence between ritual microcosmos and the macrocosmos of the wider non-sacred universe.'

¹¹ Sengaku Mayeda, trans. *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara* (Tokyo University of Tokyo Press, 1979), 11.

¹² From Sureśvara's *Sambandha-Vārttika*, in Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1927), 476. Sureśvara also wrote in *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* (in Deutsch and van Buitenen, *A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta* [Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1971], 226–27) that

Unlike the instruments of empirical knowledge, which are inert, objective, subject to modification, and transient, the witness requires no external support to establish its own existence. (II.109)

ontological status of the individual self, or *ātman*, is essentially the beginning of epistemology, psycho-philosophy, and possibly theology.

Though at a lower level of comprehension we think of reality in terms of plurality of individual selves and things, from the standpoint of the highest truth (*paramārthika*), the relation of *ātman* and *Brahman* is that of *advaita*. According to Mayeda, Śaṅkara approached the truth '*Brahman* is *Ātman* and *Ātman* is *Brahman*' along three different lines:¹³

- 1) the theological and cosmological approach,
- 2) the psychological and epistemological approach, and
- 3) the exegetical approach.

Cosmological theory examines the issue of the ultimate, efficient, and material cause(s) of the universe. For the Vedāntins, *Brahman* is both the efficient and the material cause of the realm of existents.¹⁴ Thus, according to the *Brahmasūtra*, the creation of the universe is nothing but self-creation (*ātmakṛti*), or transformation (*pariṇāma*). The theory of *pariṇāmavāda* is based upon *satkāryavāda*, that 'the effect, though different in appearance or phenomenally, is substantially identical with the cause, and pre-exists latently in it.'¹⁵ Natalia Isayeva finds

The unchangeable Self does not require proof from outside as the intellect does. All else is proved to exist in reference to that independent One. But He himself requires no proof. (II.110)

¹³ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*.

¹⁴ For the dualistic Sāṃkhya, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are respectively the efficient and the material cause of the universe; or, to quote Wilhelm Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 224–25, 'the Sāṃkhya school asserts that a nonmanifest and unconscious "nature" or "matter" (*pradhāna*, *prakṛti*) is the ultimate cause of the manifest universe, and that this concept of *pradhāna* has the support of the Veda. Śaṅkara argues in detail against this claim, and against the concomitant theory that there are many "spirits" (*puruṣa*). . . .' However Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God*, 96, points out that the two schools do share the ideas of the self's (*puruṣa*'s or *ātman*'s) passivity and immutability, and of 'the active object's attributes being superimposed upon the passively witnessing Subject,' etc.

¹⁵ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 19. Though espousing two divergent trends of *dvaita* and *advaita* in Indian philosophy, both Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta maintain *pariṇāmavāda* and *satkāryavāda* in their cosmological views. See Mohanty, *Classical Indian Philosophy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 75–7 and Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 19–20. The world of evolution, for Sāṃkhya, is potentially existent in *prakṛti* as opposed to the pure contentless consciousness. *Prakṛti* is non-temporal, non-spatial and yet its evolutes are spatio-temporal, they arise and disappear in *prakṛti*. Mohanty (2000:77) sees a link between the Sāṃkhya theory of transformation (*pariṇāmavāda*) and the Advaita Vedānta theory of illusory transformation

vivarta (appearance) to be synonymous with *māyā* (illusion), *avidyā* (ignorance), and *adhyāsa* (superimposition).¹⁶ She writes that ‘the core of the causality concept of Advaita is the notion that the effect, or the empirical world, is just an illusory appearance superimposed on the eternal *ātman*-Brahman as its cause.’¹⁷

Brahman, the ultimate cause of the universe, was also described as Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda*). Such a conceptualization of the positive nature of *Brahman* raises certain problematic theoretical questions. Mayeda lists them as follows:¹⁸

- 1) ‘If *Brahman* is one Being (*sat*) alone without any distinction, how is the manifoldness of the universe possible?’
- 2) ‘If *Brahman* is Pure Consciousness (*cit*) and if *satkāryavāda* is to be assumed, how can it create this material world?’
- 3) ‘If *Brahman* is Bliss (*ānanda*), why did it create this world full of sufferings?’¹⁹

(*vivartavāda*), which holds that ‘Cause alone is real; effect is different from the cause only in appearance.’ Cf. Karl Potter, *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 166–67, who points out that Śaṅkara sometimes advocates that nothing is ever caused (*ajātivāda*), that Brahman being completely unaffected by anything cannot create. But in other writings, like the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* I.1.2, for example, Śaṅkara ‘states that the origin, subsistence, and dissolution of the world are caused by Brahman—and where other, later Advaitins will hedge about calling Brahman a “cause” in any but the *vivarta* sense, Śaṅkara’s admission is free from any such qualification here.’

¹⁶ Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 161–62. Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 156–62, offers a detail discussion on Śaṅkhyān and Advaitic notions of *adhyāsa* in a chapter titled ‘Adhyāsa—A Non-Advaitic Beginning in Śaṅkara Vedānta’.

¹⁷ See Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.1.14–20 for his understanding of the cause-effect relationship between *Brahman* and the phenomenal world.

¹⁸ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 20.

¹⁹ Bimal Krishna Matilal in *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal: Ethics and Epics*, ed. Jonardon Ganeri (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 421–432, has analyzed Śaṅkara’s theodicy in *Ethics and Epics* by focusing on Śaṅkara’s commentary on *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.1.33–36. Matilal points out that even though Śaṅkara’s cosmology admitted only one true reality, *Brahman*, that transcends the realist or popular notions of creation and a Creator God, Śaṅkara finds it necessary to address the question of evil and of God’s justice. According to Matilal, Śaṅkara says that God does not have a free choice and his act of creation is dependent upon factors like *karma*, or the creature’s *dharma* and *adharmā*, and that Śaṅkara supports his argument with the concept of beginninglessness of the universe, which ‘is not a stupid or unintelligible notion’ and which ‘has been upheld by almost everybody in European antiquity outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition.’

Śaṅkara answers such questions regarding the relation between the Cause and its effects and the metaphysical status of the latter by use of two Upaniṣadic terms, *upādhi* (limiting adjunct) and *nāmarūpa* (name and form). Sara Grant quotes Śaṅkara's *Bṛhadāraṇyakoṇiṣadbhāṣya* II.4.10 to explain that name and form are the limiting adjuncts of *Brahman*, or the 'objects' of the *vyāvahārika* (phenomenal, empirical) level of reality.²⁰

Śaṅkara posits the principle of 'Unevolved Name-and-Form' (*avyākṛte nāmarūpe*) as the supersensible seed of the world (*jagadbījabhūta*), a kind of primary material of the world. For him, 'everything material evolves from Unevolved Name-and-Form, which according to the *Upadeśasāhasrī* (II.1.18–22) itself first evolved from *Brahman*.'²¹

Hacker writes that 'from the material *avyākṛte nāmarūpe* do the transformations (*vikāra*) of the world, i.e., the *vyākṛte nāmarūpe*, proceed.' The Unevolved Name-and-Form becomes 'ether' or 'space' from which arise the subtle elements, the gross elements, vegetation, blood, sperm, and so on, until a body is created; the body consists of nothing but name-and-form. Śaṅkara's description also includes the mind and sense organs as evolutes of name-and-form (US II.1.22). He then asserts 'on the authority of *Śruti* and *Smṛti* that *Brahman*, after creating the body, entered name-and-form of the body as *Ātman*.'²² Therefore, *Brahman* is *Ātman*'.²³

²⁰ Sara Grant, *Śaṅkarācārya's Concept of Relation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 64. Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedānta*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 68, says that apart from being referred to as 'upādhis of the soul, above all the body,' *nāmarūpe* are 'that which *avidyā* or *māyā* is for other Advaitins before and after Śaṅkara.' Also see Hacker (1995), 74–75, for 'concatenation *avidyā-nāmarūpa-upādhi*' in various passages from Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (I.4.22, II.1.14, II.1.22, II.3.46, III.2.6).

²¹ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 20. By stressing on its evolution from *Brahman* (*te nāmarūpe . . . vyākriyamāne . . . ātmanah*, US II.1.19), Śaṅkara distinguishes it from *prakṛti* of Sāṃkhya even though he does refer to *avyākṛte nāmarūpe* as *prakṛti* in *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.1.14. However, Śaṅkara's *Nāmarūpa* is dependent on *Brahman* and abides in it (*svātmastha*, US I.1.18). This theory corresponds to the *satkāryavāda*. Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 70, comments: 'For [Śaṅkara] material cause and product are identical, and the object to be *effected*, already latent in the subject, is at the same time also the object to be *affected*.'

²² Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 68.

²³ In Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 21. In contrast, *puruṣa* of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is never in actual contact with *prakṛti*. Their relation is always that of proximity; there is an absolute separation between the two.

The body consisting of five elements is a limiting adjunct of *ātman*. Along with the body—gross (*sthūla*) and subtle (*sūkṣma*)—other adjuncts are *mukhyaprāṇa* (primary vital air), the five *karmendriya*-s (organs of action), the five *buddhīndriya*-s (senses), and the *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ or cause). The senses themselves, like the external objects, are ‘material and have no consciousness at all’,²⁴ and are different from *ātman*. The principal vital air (*mukhyaprāṇa*) is concerned with unconscious life and is not considered as an *indriya*. The status of the *antaḥkaraṇa* is not so clear in Śaṅkara’s thought. *Antaḥkaraṇa* is generally understood as one and has four different modifications, namely *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṁkāra* (or *viñāna*, cognition), and *citta* (retro-cognition or memory).²⁵ Potter notes that *antaḥkaraṇa*, is ‘a conception, important in Sāṃkhya, which Advaita has assimilated into its own framework.’²⁶ Critics like Deussen and Mayeda also think that Śaṅkara, like the Sāṃkhya school, regarded *manas* as material and unconscious. *Manas* and the *indriya*-s, for Śaṅkara, ‘consist of name-and-form (*nāmarūpātma*, US II.1.22) and [...] they are, therefore, by nature different from *Ātman*.’²⁷

Śaṅkara described *ātman* as ‘Witness of all the *antaḥkaraṇa*-s [i.e., all the four modifications]’ (*krtsnāntaḥkaraṇekṣaṇam*, US I.18.174). It is the most important among the means of perception (*upalabdhisādhana*) discussed in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.3.32.²⁸

²⁴ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 29.

²⁵ See Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.3.32, especially Gambhirananda (1972) 493.

²⁶ Potter, *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies*, 171. However, Kārikā-Sāṃkhya recognizes only *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṁkāra* as components of *antaḥkaraṇa* (see Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 187, 189, 266; Larson and Bhattacharya, ed. *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 25, 158). ‘Pātañjala-Sāṃkhya (Yoga)’, on the other hand, holds that ‘Intellect, egoity, and mind are brought together into a single all-pervasive cognitive faculty called awareness (*citta*)’ (Larson and Bhattacharya, *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 27).

Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 117, comments on the similarity between Vedānta and Pātañjala-Yoga’s psychology thus: ‘In contrast to [Kārikā]-Sāṃkhya, Yoga leaves the inner sense undifferentiated, and Śaṅkara in particular almost wholly abstains from differentiating it. The Yoga system mostly calls it *citta*, but also *buddhi* and *manas*; Śaṅkara designates it as *antaḥkaraṇa*, *buddhi*, *manas*, or *citta*, mostly indiscriminately’, and that in both systems *ahaṁkāra* is not a psychic faculty.

²⁷ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 33.

²⁸ While discussing Śaṅkara’s theory of witness-consciousness (*sākṣin*) and perception, Bina Gupta, *The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 48–51, writes about the relation of *ātman* to *antaḥkaraṇa* and the role the latter plays in perception. After con-

On the role of the senses and the *antaḥkaraṇa*, Śaṅkara held that when the five senses are directed toward external objects they discern the special object of each sense. These external objects are material, unconscious and not self-established (*svataḥsiddhyasambhava*). They are established (*siddhi*) or known through modifications (*vṛtti*-s or *pratyaya*-s)²⁹ 'arising from the senses with the assistance of the inner sense [*antaḥkaraṇa*].'³⁰ According to Mayeda, these modifications (*pratyaya*-s) of the *buddhi* or *antaḥkaraṇa* are caused by the forms of external objects and take the form of external objects.³¹

But the *antaḥkaraṇa*, its *pratyaya*-s, the senses, and the external objects are all material and unconscious. These are 'objects perceptible (*grāhya*) by a perceiver (*grāhaka*) different from themselves (US II.2.74). This perceiver, according to Śaṅkara, is *Ātman*.'³² *Ātman* is posited by Śaṅkara as transcendently changeless (*kūṭastha*) and constant (*nitya*). If *ātman*'s role in external perception is understood in terms of it pervading the *buddhi*—which appears in the form of external objects (*pratyaya*-s)—it raises an important issue.

The *buddhi* is subject to change and destruction insofar as it is modified by *pratyaya*-s caused by the forms of external objects. Would not the *ātman*'s perceivership by pervading the *buddhi* make it subject to change?³³

cluding that Śaṅkara uses 'sākṣin' in two ways: (1) *sākṣin* as simply *ātman*, meaning highest knowledge or pure consciousness (*śuddhacaitanya*), and (2) *sākṣin* as *ātman* limited by the *antaḥkaraṇa*. The second is modified consciousness, that is, 'a reflection of pure consciousness through a mode of the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*)' and is thus empirical knowledge of the phenomenal world. The modifications of *ahamkāra* account for perception.

Cf. Sāṃkhya's distinction between 'awareness' (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*, *cittavṛtti*) and 'consciousness' (*cetana*, *puruṣa*). Larson in Larson and Bhattacharya, ed. *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, 77, writes: 'Whereas awareness (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*) (namely, intellect, egoity and mind) is active, intentional, engaged and at every moment a reflection of subtle materiality; consciousness (*puruṣa*) cannot think or act and is not ontologically involved or intentionally related in any sense to primordial materiality other than being passively present. Consciousness, in other words, is sheer contentless presence (*sākṣitva*).'

²⁹ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 35, comments that Śaṅkara's use of 'vṛtti' (US I.13.7; I.18.1, etc.) is probably based upon that of *vṛtti* in *cittavṛtti* as in the *Yogasūtra* (I.2; IV.18, etc.); but that Śaṅkara prefers the term *pratyaya* to *vṛtti*. Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 118, makes a further clarification that 'Vṛtti is associated more with *citta*, *pratyaya* with *buddhi*.'

³⁰ Gupta, *The Disinterested Witness*, 49.

³¹ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 35,

³² Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 36.

³³ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 37, points out that this theoretical problem is

Śaṅkara answered this question by introducing the concept of *ābhāsa* to affirm the nature of *ātman* as *kūṭastha* and *nitya*. *Ābhāsa* is 'reflection' as in the reflection of 'self-effulgent *ātman*-consciousness' (*caitanya* *pratibimba*, US I.5.4).³⁴ It is also 'false appearance' as when the *buddhi* 'falsely appears (*ābhāsa*) as perceiver because of *Ātman*'s consciousness (*bodha*, US I.5.4) in it'.³⁵

Śaṅkara contended that *ātman* is different from its reflection in the *buddhi* (US I.18.32 and 33), and the reflection is essentially unreal. Thus, *ātman*, whose nature is perception, is not an agent of the act of perceiving. It does not do anything other than simply exist. Mayeda conducts a detailed semantic analysis of Śaṅkara's theory of perception. He explains that when the *ātman*-consciousness (*caitanya*, *cit*) is superimposed upon the *buddhi*, *buddhi* becomes consciousness-like (*cinnibha*, US I.18.65 and 68). Similarly, when the reflection of *ātman* is in the *buddhi* and the *karṭṛtva* of the *buddhi* is superimposed upon *ātman*, *ātman* falsely appears as perceiver who perceives in an *action* of perception.³⁶ But *ātman* is constant perception itself. It is *nityopal-abdhimātra* (US II.2.79).³⁷ Mayeda writes: 'Perception (*avabodha*) does

common to the Advaita, the Sāṃkhya (e.g. SK 20), and the Yoga (eg. YS IV.17–18) *darśanas*.

³⁴ Cf. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* II.3.50, where Śaṅkara comments that 'individual soul is a reflection of the supreme Self like the semblance [or reflection] of the sun in water' (Gambhirananda 1972, 515).

³⁵ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 37. It is interesting to note that for both the Sāṃkhya-Yogins and the Vedāntins like Śaṅkara, the seer (*puruṣa*, *ātman*) becomes seemingly associated with *buddhi* through reflection and due to *avidyā*. But whereas *puruṣa*, *buddhi*, and the object of perception are all real in the Sāṃkhya view, the *jīva-sākṣī*, *buddhi*, and the object of perception are all false on the level of *paramārthika satya* in Advaita Vedānta. For Śaṅkara, only *ātman* is Real.

³⁶ Ref. '... *ātmana upalabdyābhāsaphalāvasāna*...' (US II.2.77).

Cf. *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 20:

*tasmāt tatsamyogād acetanaṃ
cetanāvad iva līṅgam,
guṇakarṭṛtve ca tathā
kartṛva bhavaty udāsīnaḥ.*

³⁷ Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 118–19, compares Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta with Sāṃkhya-Yoga with respect to the theory of perception, especially the doctrine of *antaḥkaraṇa* and its relation to the self, and finds that Vedānta's version coincides almost entirely with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga model. Furthermore, the emphasis on inactivity and neutrality of the self was also shared by the three schools: 'That the self is of the nature of *cit(i)*, *citiśakti*, *caitanya*, *dr̥ṣ(i)*, *draṣṭṛ*, *sākṣin*, *upalabdḥ*, and *upalabdhi* is a doctrine common to Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta', according to Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 118.

not belong to the *buddhi* and action does not belong to *Ātman*.³⁸ *Ātman*, like/as *Brahman*, is actionless (*akriya*) and constant (*nitya*).

So far we have seen how Śaṅkara dealt with *ātman* vis-à-vis external perception. In Mayeda's view, Śaṅkara did not make any fundamental distinction between external and internal perception. Whereas in the former the objects of perception are external objects, in the latter the 'objects' are mental or psychological events such as desire, pain, pleasure, etc. These events, like the external objects, are 'transformed into *pratyaya*-s or *vṛtti*-s of the *buddhi* during the process of perception.³⁹ Going through a similar analysis as discussed earlier, Śaṅkara arrived at the same conclusion that 'the Seeing of the Seer [*ātman*] is, therefore, constant, pure, infinite and alone':

draṣṭur dṛṣṭis tato nityā
śuddhānantā ca kevalā. (US I.13.8).⁴⁰

On the basis of ideas derived from the *Upaniṣad*-s like the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara analysed four states of *ātman*, one of which was the foregoing investigation of external and internal perception that takes place during the waking (*jāgrat*) state. The next two are the dreaming (*svapna*) state and the state of deep sleep (*susupta*). Like other Indian philosophers, Śaṅkara also speculated upon a fourth (*caturtha*, *turya*, *turīya*) state which transcends the other three.

In the *jāgratāvasthā* when the five senses and the *antaḥkaraṇa* are at work and the *ātman* is conscious of external objects, it is called *virāj* or *vaiśvānara* (US I.17.64). In the *svapnāvasthā* only the *antaḥkaraṇa* is functioning, and the object of perception is 'a residual impression (*vāsanā*) of something grasped through the senses in the waking state (US I.11.10; I.15.24); this is like recollection of a memory in the waking state (US I.14.1; I.17.24).⁴¹ In this second state the *ātman* is called *taijasa* (US I.15.24) or *prajāpati* (US I.17.64).

³⁸ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 39.

³⁹ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 42.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* 64:

evam tattvābhyāsān nā'smi
na me nā'ham ity aparīṣeṣam,
aviparyayād viśuddham
kevalam utpadyate jñānam.

Thus, where once the salvation-knowledge arises as to the false appropriation of 'I'-notion (which perceives) to the consciousness, the knowledge is complete because it is free from error, pure and solitary.

⁴¹ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 44.

During *svaṇnāvasthā* the *ātman* is free from *upādhi*-s such as body and the senses. It appears in a purer form and is *svayaṃprabha* (self-effulgent). In the third state of deep sleep even the *antaḥkaraṇa* ceases to function. The *ātman* in this state is known as *prājña* (US I.15.25; I.17.64). Here the consciousness *of* something ceases and what remains is a pure contentless consciousness. But this state is non-everlasting as are the other two. The *ātman* is still with limiting adjuncts (*sopādhi*) (US I.15.29).

The *ātman* without limiting adjuncts (*anupādhi*) is, in Śaṅkara's words, 'indescribable, without parts, attributeless, and pure; neither mind nor speech reach It':

... *nirupākhya 'nupādhiḥ*.
niṣkalo nirguṇaḥ śuddhaḥ
taṃ mano vāk ca nāpnutaḥ (US I.15.29)

This *ātman* is *turīya*. Since *turīya* is nothing but *Brahman*, *ātman* is characterized with negative adjectives used to describe *Brahman*. For example, It is now known as *advaya* (non-dual), *akāma* (free from desire), *aja* (unborn), *apahatapāpman* (free from evils), *abhaya* (fearless), *kūṭasthanitya* (absolutely changeless and constant), etc.

Having arrived at the truth '*ātman* is *Brahman*' through the cosmological and psycho-epistemological approaches, Śaṅkara finally invokes *Śruti* to validate his conclusions.

If the knowledge of *Brahman-ātman* is not realizable through sense-perception or internal perception or even during deep sleep, how indeed is it obtained? According to Śaṅkara, it is attained only through *Śruti*. He also described the knowledge of *ātman-Brahman* as *svapramāṇaka* (self-evident) and *svataḥsiddha* (self-established). Nevertheless, he applied exegetical methods to prove that certain Vedic-Upaniṣadic concepts contained the truth of the non-difference of *Brahman* and *ātman*. For instance, he employed his exegetical principles to interpret the *mahāvākya*-s (great sayings) '*tat tvam asi*'⁴² and '*aham brahmāsmi*'⁴³ in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. As John Grimes says, 'a *mahāvākya* is an identity statement; that is, a statement which directly declares the essential identity between the individual and the Absolute.'⁴⁴

⁴² *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7, etc.

⁴³ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10.

⁴⁴ John Grimes, trans. and ed. *The Vivekacūḍāmaṇi of Śaṅkarācārya Bhagavatpāda: An Introduction and Translation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 52, n. 167. Apart from

Of the sentence ‘*tat tvam asi*’, Śaṅkara writes that ‘the oneness of *ātman* [and *Brahman*] should indeed be known through the understanding of the meaning of [this one] sentence’:

*jñānaikārthaparavāt taṃ
vākyam ekaṃ tato viduḥ
ekatvaṃ hy ātmano jñeyam
vākyārthapratipattitāḥ.* (US I.17.9)

For Śaṅkara, the meanings of *tat* and *asi* in ‘*tat tvam asi*’ are already established. ‘That’ (*tat*) is *Brahman*—described by Śaṅkara as *sat* and *nirduḥkha*—and ‘art’ (*asi*) means that the words ‘That’ and ‘Thou’ have the same referent.⁴⁵ If *asi* indicates identity judgment, and *tat* means *Brahman*, *tvam* must also refer to *Brahman*. ‘Thou’, to be compatible with ‘That,’ must also be *nirduḥkha*. Therefore, among the various meanings of ‘Thou,’ the one not incompatible with ‘the Painless One’ is to be admitted. And that is ‘the inner *ātman*’ (*pratyagātman*).

Similarly, the word ‘*aham*’ in ‘*aham brahmāsmi*’ should also be understood as referring to the inner *ātman*. Just as *tvam* cannot be a *duḥkhin* (sufferer), *aham* cannot be a *bhokṭṛ* (enjoyer) or a *karṭṛ* (agent, doer).⁴⁶

the two *mahāvākyas* mentioned above, there are two more: ‘*prajñānam brahma*’ (*Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.1.3) and ‘*āyam ātmā brahma*’ (*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 2.7). See Śaṅkara’s *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 162, 204, 251–65, 270, 281, 284, 305, and 334 for use of these *mahāvākyas* in *advaitic* teaching.

⁴⁵ See Mudgal, *Advaita of Śaṅkara: A Reappraisal*, 35 and 78. He objects to the Vedāntic interpretations of the sentence. As ‘*tat tvam asi*’ is a *part* of the sentence ‘*ēṣa aṇimā, etadātmīyamidaṃ sarvaṃ, tat satyam, sa ātmā tat tvam asi*,’ it should not, in fact, cannot, be understood outside its context. ‘*Tat*’ is in neuter gender and so it cannot go with the ‘*sa ātmā*’ which is masculine. Thus, in Mudgal’s words, ‘the sentence would mean—‘You too are dependent (like all other things) on this Supreme Being which is subtle’. Cf. Karl Potter’s *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies*, 84–86. Potter says that ‘explanation [by the philosophers] may not, and frequently does not, stem from the most obvious meaning of the utterance.’

⁴⁶ Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 118, discusses this point of contention between the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaitic interpretations of the role of self or *puruṣa* in perceptual process. *Yogasūtra* 2.18 has the word ‘*bhoga*’ (experience or enjoying) in relation to *puruṣa*. Vyāsa in his *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* also uses the term with reference to *puruṣa*, that even though experience/enjoying and liberation (*bhogaḥpavargau*) are created by and exists in *buddhi*, *puruṣa* is the experiencer/enjoyer of the fruit of the *buddhi*’s *pratyaya*-s (*sa hi tatphalasya bhokteti*). The writer of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa*—believed to be Śaṅkara by Hacker, but refuted by T. S. Rukmani, trans, *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa of Śaṅkara: Vivaraṇa text with English Translation, and Critical Notes, along with Text and English Translation of Patañjali’s Yogasūtras and Vyāsabhāṣya* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001), vol. 1, pp. ix–xxxi—takes exception to Sāṃkhya-Yoga’s description of the self as a *bhokṭṛ* and contends that *bhoga* is characterised

The *ahamkārtṛ* (I-maker) is the *buddhi* which has only the reflection of the inner *ātman*. When *buddhi* becomes consciousness-like, assuming the form of *ātman*, it becomes the locus of the ‘I’-notion. And on the ordinary level words like ‘*aham*’ and ‘*tvam*’ refer to the *ahamkārtṛ*, i.e., *buddhi*, not the inner *ātman*. It follows from the *mahāvākya*-s that when *avidyā* is overcome and one realizes *ātman*, he also comes to know *Brahman*. Grimes explains the significance of the *mahāvākya*-s in the Advaitic system thus:

Each of the *mahāvākyas* imparts a three-fold knowledge which Advaita seizes upon as the key to self-realization. First, they remove a person’s deep-seated misconception that they are a finite, bound, imperfect mortal being, and conversely, they reveal that the true Self of each individual is infinite, ever-free, ever-perfect, immortal. Second, they remove the deep-rooted misconception that the supreme Reality is remote, hidden, unattainable, and declare that it is immediate, direct, the innermost Self of all. Third, they reveal that there are not separate individuals and an Absolute and that each individual is somehow part of the whole. Instead, they declare, unequivocally, that, here and now, ‘You are That’, without an iota of difference.⁴⁷

The identity of *ātman* and *Brahman* is more explicitly discussed in the prose section of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* by Śaṅkara. In the *gadyabandha*, Śaṅkara is concerned with teaching the knowledge of *Brahman-ātman* to the seeker. He explains the knowledge to be taught as ‘the oneness of *ātman* [with *Brahman*]’ (US II.1.6). Throughout his exposition, Śaṅkara cites passages from *Śruti* to underscore the point that ‘it is prohibited to understand that [*ātman*] is different from [*Brahman*]’ (*naivaṃ somya pratipattum arhasi, pratiśiddhatvād bhedaḥ pratipatteḥ*, US II.1.26). He states his understanding of the passages of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. (1.4.10; 2.4.6; 4.4.19) in terms of transmigratory existence and final release. According to his interpretations, *Śruti* passages reveal that ‘transmigratory existence results from the understanding that [*ātman*] is different [from *Brahman*]’ (*etā eva śrutayo bhedaḥ pratipatteḥ saṃsāragamaṇam . . .*, US II.1.27). And ‘final release results from the realization of the identity [of *ātman* and *Brahman*]’ (*abhedapratipatteḥ ca mokṣaṇam . . .*, US II.1.28).

by ignorance (*bhogarūpasyāvidyālakṣaṇasya*), and reduces ‘the sense of the word “enjoyer” to the act of pure sensing (*bhokteti grahaṇādi phalasyopalabdhā*)’ (Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*, 118). See Rukmani’s translation of the *sūtra*, the *sūtrabhāṣya*, and the *sūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa* (2001, 1:292–300), especially 292, 293, 298, and 300.

⁴⁷ Grimes, *The Vivekaśūdhāmāṇi*, 29.

So far, we have inspected Śaṅkara's teachings in the context of the *ātman-Brahman* identity. Next we can examine the nature of the concept of *ātman-Brahman* as found in *Upadeśasāhasrī* in comparison with the concept of *puruṣa* in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa and the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali.

Vedānta as well as Sāṃkhya-Yoga hold the Ultimate Reality to be pure contentless consciousness. Such a consciousness has been characterized by Īśvarakṛṣṇa thus:

... *sākṣitvam asya puruṣasya,*
kaivalyaṃ mādhyasthyaṃ
draṣṭṛtvam akartṛbhāvaś ca. (SK 19)

Larson sums up that Sāṃkhya views contentless consciousness to be:

(a) pure passive presence (*sākṣitva*); (b) distinct from the tripartite process (*kaivalya*); (c) uninvolved in the transactions of the three *guṇas* except for its passive presence (*mādhyasthya*); (d) the foundation for subjectivity or pure consciousness (*draṣṭṛtva*); and (e) incapable of activity (*akartṛbhāva*) (SK 19).⁴⁸

In other words, *puruṣa* is a witness, possessed of isolation or freedom, indifferent, a spectator and inactive.⁴⁹ Śaṅkara concurs in his *Brahma-sūtrabhāṣya* I.2.28 by saying that 'the statement "He who knows the One [*paramātmā*] having the likeness of *Puruṣa* and residing in *Puruṣa*", is made with a view to presenting the nature of the pure witness that belongs to the supreme Self under consideration' (*yaḥ prakṛtaḥ paramātmādhyaṭmamadhidaivatam ca puruṣavidhatvopādhiḥ tasya yat kevalam sākṣirūpaṃ tadabhiprāyeṇa idam ucyate—puruṣe'ntaḥ pratiṣṭhitam veda iti*).⁵⁰ In *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Śaṅkara writes of *Brahman-ātman*:

dr̥śisvarūpaṃ ... ekam ...
tad eva cāhaṃ satatam vimukta om. (US I.10.1)

⁴⁸ Larson, 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Sāṃkhya,' in Larson and Bhattacharya, ed. *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition*, 81.

⁴⁹ According to Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 16–17, if *puruṣa* nevertheless appears to be an 'agent' (*kartṛ*), it is because of (1) human illusion and (2) the unique correlation called *yogyatā*, which is 'a kind of pre-established harmony between the two essentially distinct realities'—the Self (*puruṣa*) and intelligence (*buddhi*).

⁵⁰ *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), 153; Gupta, *The Disinterested Witness*, 172, n. 8.

Brahman is the witness, the observer, the pure, attributeless and, therefore, alone (*sākṣī cetā 'guṇaḥ śuddho brahmaivāsmīti kevalaḥ*, US I.11.6). On being inactive and free, the Pure Consciousness says:

*nāmarūpakriyābhyo 'nyo
nityamuktasvarūpavān.
aham ātmā paraṃ brahma
cinmātro 'haṃ sadādvayaḥ.* (US I.11.7)

Again It speaks:

*netinetyātmārūpatvān⁵¹
na me kāryā kriyā kvacit.* (US I. 11.14)

Similarly, the *puruṣa* of the *Yogasūtra* is:

draṣṭā dṛśimātraḥ śuddho 'pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ. (YS II.20)

He is pure gnosis,⁵² and though pure he apparently sees through the intellect. According to Hariharānanda Āraṇya, the intellect, which is unconscious by itself, appears to be sparked into consciousness by the vicinity of *puruṣa*, and its functions or modifications are always witnessed by the *puruṣa*.⁵³ As Patañjali says:

sadā jñātās citta-vṛttayas tat-prabhoḥ puruṣasyāpariṇāmivāt. (YS IV.18)

Śaṅkara expresses parallel views when he writes:

*buddhyārūḍham sadā sarvaṃ
dṛśyate yatra tatra vā.* (US I.7.1)

Brahman maintains that everything located in the intellect is always seen by It in every case of cognition. And:

*yathātmabuddhicārāṇāṃ
sākṣī tadvat pareṣv api.* (US I.7.2)

⁵¹ Ref. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.3.6, etc. on *neti, neti*.

⁵² Cf. *Brahman* is *nityaviññānasvarūpo* (US II.1.18). It is 'just a mass of knowledge' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.12). It is 'knowledge, bliss' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.9.28).

⁵³ Hariharānanda Āraṇya *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali: Containing His Yoga Aphorisms with Vyāsa's Commentary in Sanskrit and a Translation with Annotations Including Many Suggestions for the Practice of Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York, 1983 [1963]), 180, 380,

Mayeda comments in a footnote that ‘*Buddhicāra* is synonymous with *cittaapracāra* (US II.2.75; 82), which is again synonymous with *cittavṛtti* in *Yogasūtra* I.2; IV.18.’⁵⁴

Buddhi is not self-illuminative, as it is perceptible by the *puruṣa*:

na tat svābhāsaṃ dṛśyatvāt. (YS IV.19)

M. N. Dvivedi comments that ‘the soul (*Puruṣa*) is . . . reflected . . . in the mind, and takes . . . through this reflection, the form of thinking principle. Through the power of this reflection the soul is enkindled into consciousness, and performs acts of cognition.’⁵⁵ Again, this is similar to Śaṅkara’s ideas on a *kūṭasthanīya ātman* and its *ābhāsa*.

Thus, from the preceding analyses it can be inferred that the descriptions of the ontological nature of *Brahman-ātman* and *puruṣa*—in the respective texts of Śaṅkara, Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Patañjali—have close parallels. But whereas in the Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta the concepts of *puruṣa* and *Brahman* do not yield to theism, the *puruṣaviśeṣa* of the Yoga school is God who is described as:

kleśa-karma-vipākāśayair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣa-viśeṣa īśvaraḥ. (YS I.24)

Īśvara is a particular soul untouched by affliction, works, fruition, and impressions. And yet He is still one among the many *puruṣa*-s, for He does not warrant a twenty-sixth principle (*tattva*) in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga metaphysics. In modern parlance, *īśvara* of the *Yogasūtra* is ‘first among equals’. What distinguishes Him from other *puruṣa*-s is that He is considered to be ‘*ever free, ever absolved, ever omniscient*’.⁵⁶ In contrast, other beings have to realize their pure contentless consciousness, their *puruṣa*. Vyāsa, in his commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, has written: ‘Others have attained release by cutting the three bonds, but for the Lord such bondage never was nor will come to be, as it will for one who has absorbed his mind into *prakṛti*. But the Lord is ever freed, ever the Lord. His eternal perfection is from perfect *sattva*.’⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mayeda, *A Thousand Teachings*, 119, n. 2.

⁵⁵ M. N. Dvivedi, *The Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali*. 3rd ed. (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1934 [1890]), 114.

⁵⁶ Dvivedi, *The Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali*, 18.

⁵⁷ In Trevor Leggett, trans. *The Complete Commentary by Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtra-s: A Full Translation of the Newly Discovered Text* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990), 108.

There is an inherent contradiction in Patañjali's concept of *īśvara* as *puruṣaviśeṣa*. He has written of '*īśvara-praṇidhāna*' (YS I.23) whereby God helps devoted souls that are bound in *prakṛti* to achieve liberation.⁵⁸ The paradox lies in the notion that other souls achieve the goal of final isolation upon *mokṣa* while the Lord is shown to be forever involved in the world. Moreover, *īśvara* is permanently in contact with matter, for 'his eternal perfection is from perfect *sattva*.'⁵⁹ *Sattva* is a *prākṛtika guṇa* (natural quality). Is He then permanently united to the quality of *sattva*, that is, having *sāttvika upādhi*?⁶⁰ If so, how is He a *puruṣaviśeṣa*? Can He be regarded as 'the eternal exemplar of the perfectly liberated and isolated soul'?⁶¹ Unlike all the other *puruṣa*-s, he is eternally aware of the phenomenal world and a mere object of contemplation.

The God of the *Yogasūtra* appears as 'the divine archetype of the soul by the contemplation of whom the soul can itself become what it always is, immortal. The Yogin's aim is neither deification nor participation in the divine essence . . .'⁶² Eliade goes a step further in questioning the role of *īśvara* in Patañjali's Yoga, and writes:

Although it was Patañjali who introduced this new and (when all is said and done) perfectly useless element of *Īśvara* into the dialectics of the Sāṃkhya soteriological doctrine, he does not give *Īśvara* the significance that late commentators will accord him. What is of first importance in the *Yoga-sūtras* is technique—in other words, the yogin's will and capacity for self-mastery and concentration.⁶³

⁵⁸ Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 50, notes that according to Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*, only later commentators like Vācaspatimiśra and Vijñānabhikṣu believed that *īśvara* removes the barriers created by *prakṛti*. Also see Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 74–76.

⁵⁹ Leggett, *The Complete Commentary by Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtra-s*, 108.

⁶⁰ Cf. Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 168, who comments that '*puruṣa* is said to be opposite [*viparīta*] from both *vyakta* and *avyakta*—i.e., *puruṣa* is not characterized as being made up of the three *guṇas*. . . . In other words, it exists distinct from the manifest and unmanifest world.' Compare the above with Āraṇya's (1983:58) comment that 'It should be clearly understood that *Īśvara* is neither the *Puruṣa* principle nor the *Pradhāna* principle, but is made up of both. He is a particular Being and His godly attributes are based on the ultimate constituent principles.'

⁶¹ R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1960), 36.

⁶² Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 37; Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 75, also calls *īśvara* an archetype of the yogin, and speculates whether *īśvara* was 'very probably a patron of certain yogic sects.'

⁶³ Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 74.

Yogic technique is directed toward the practitioner's disintegration, argues Yohanan Grinshpon in his study *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-Yoga*: 'The yogin unties the knots of existence, dismantling combinations, resisting 'integrations', breaking entities apart, living in the spirit of analysis and separation (the spirit of Sāṅkhya) until he decombines his very own being into the densest possible silence.'⁶⁴

Grinshpon's thesis that the hallmark of Pātañjala-Yoga is the ideal of separation and disintegration goes against the popular imagining of Yoga as 'unification, merger, integration, and connectedness' to which even scholars such as Mircea Eliade (*Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*) or Barbara Stoler Miller (*Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*) subscribe.⁶⁵ Grinshpon comments that:

[Yoga] is thus opposed to powerful innate drives inherent in the human condition. From the vantage point of yoga, dominant spiritual motivations that seek modes of merging and 'combination' (with the absolute, a deity)—as expressed by *bhakti*-movements or in Advaita Vedānta—may well be variations of the basic disease of 'integration.'⁶⁶

According to Pātañjala-Yoga, *īśvara-praṇidhāna* is an optional, not essential or even necessary, condition to achieving yogic disintegration or radical aloneness (*kaivalya*). As Whicher points out, this is implied by the word *vā* (or) in *Yogasūtra* I.23.⁶⁷ In fact, God ceases to be relevant once *kaivalya* has been achieved.

Similarly, in the case of Advaita Vedānta, Ram-Prasad comments:

The personal God is the God of the texts and Śaṅkara is emphatic in his assertion that with liberation, texts are made redundant along with every other element of the unliberated life. He is willing to say on occasion that the Lord (*Īśvara*) is as much an expression of the linguistic imagination as any other thought of the unliberated mind.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Yohanan Grinshpon in his study *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 4. But not Gerald Larson. I bear witness to his continual threat to the students of his 'Philosophies of India' class at Indiana University to whack us over the head if anyone dared to say that *yoga* meant 'union'. Again and again he reminded us that it means *dis*-union.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5–6.

⁶⁷ Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 197, 336, n. 266.

⁶⁸ Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, *Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 215.

For Śaṅkara, then, although *īśvara* (*saguṇa Brahman*) may be supreme at the level of *vyāvahārika satya* (empirical reality), He is non-existent at the level of *paramārthika satya* (supreme reality).⁶⁹ On the relationship between *ātman* and *īśvara*, Śaṅkara wrote in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*:

*īśvaraś ced anātmā syān
nāsāv asmīti dhārayet.
ātma ced īśvaro 'smīti
vidyā sānyanivartikā. (US I.3.1)*

If the Lord is non-*ātman*, one ought not to dwell upon the knowledge 'I am He'. If He is *ātman*, the knowledge 'I am the Lord' destroys the other knowledge, i.e., the notion of difference. As Ram-Prasad understands it, 'If there is a God, there can be no non-duality; if there is non-duality, there need be no God.'⁷⁰

For Vedāntins like Śaṅkara, individual *jīva*-s aspire to realize themselves as what they already are—the Absolute, *ātman-Brahman*, or the Lord (for He is also *Brahman* as Ultimate Reality is undifferentiated One).⁷¹ In contrast, for the Sāṃkhya-Yogin 'God is . . . excluded from man's extra-temporal experience' in that the final goal is to achieve radical isolation of the *puṛuṣa*, not a communion or union with God.⁷²

Thus, Śaṅkara's Vedānta and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga seem to agree that *kaivalya*, *mokṣa*, or liberation means 'the isolation of the eternal from the contingent.'⁷³ And although for Sāṃkhya God's existence is not proved, they are of one view that at the empirical level God exists. But God is rendered redundant once the individual has realized the mystical experience of the oneness or aloneness. The schools differ in that the oneness, for Śaṅkara's Vedānta, is . . . One, *ātman-Brahman*. Whereas for Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the One is an individual monad,

⁶⁹ See Mudgal, *Advaita of Śaṅkara: A Reappraisal*, 16, who states that the 'two tiers' of truth are not different. And 'the lower subsists in the higher; the higher transcends the lower. . . . The higher is the lower, only when spatio-temporally conditioned. The lower is the higher sub-specie-aeternitatis.'

⁷⁰ Ram-Prasad, *Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought*, 216.

⁷¹ It appears that for Śaṅkara there is a radical non-difference between man, God and the attributeless Absolute. Just as *jīva*-s have *upādhi*-s as limiting adjuncts. *īśvara* has the totality of subtle bodies and intellects as His limiting adjuncts. Thus, from the transcendental point of view both *jīva* and God are phenomenal, and *ātman-Brahman* is the only Reality.

⁷² Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 39.

⁷³ Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 38.

only one among many other monads, each distinct from one another as well as from the *puruṣaviśeṣa*.

The concept of *puruṣa* of Sāṃkhya-Yoga is akin to the *jīva* of the Vedānta to the extent that, in their plurality, both can be understood as ‘individual centres of experience’.⁷⁴ However, for Śaṅkara, *jīva* is *ātman* limited by adjuncts, an individual only so long as the adjuncts are not discarded, whereas *puruṣa* of Sāṃkhya-Yoga remains an individual monad after its *prākṛtika* adjuncts are dissolved at the moment of realization of its freedom.⁷⁵ It does not get absorbed in an indefinable oneness of Uddifferentiated Whole that is *Brahman*.

As stated earlier, in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Śaṅkara is preoccupied with the identity of *ātman* and *Brahman*, and, consequently, he is less attentive to either the concept or the status of the individual self (*ātman* or *jīva*). The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, because of the very metaphysics of the Sāṃkhya system, characterizes the individual soul as *puruṣa*. Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* concentrates upon each individual Yogin’s journey toward the final *kaivalya* of his *puruṣa*.⁷⁶ Only in this text do we find an explicit reference to a God who may be the object of a Yogin’s contemplation for the duration of time until he finally comprehends the non-relation of his *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*. After that moment the *īśvara* as *puruṣaviśeṣa* is irrelevant for the free soul.

The three texts examined here are framed within the contextual framework of their traditions. But on the level of ultimate truth, all three traditions—with their respective metaphysics of ‘Self’—are non-theistic. For the three *darśana*-s, then, human condition remains precisely that—*human* condition—which has to be dealt with at the human level, and therefore knowledge of Self is absolutely relevant to an individual’s destiny.

⁷⁴ Mudgal, *Advaita of Śaṅkara*, 19.

⁷⁵ In fact, neither the word *bandh* (bondage) nor *mukta* (freedom) apply to the *puruṣa* of *Sāṃkhyakārikā* as:

tasmān na badhyate ’ddhā na mucyate
nā’pi saṃsarati kaścit,
saṃsarati badhyate mucyate ca
nānāśrayā prakṛtiḥ. (SK 62)

⁷⁶ Apparently Sāṃkhya-Yoga is, in Potter’s terms (*Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies*), a path philosophy. The Sāṃkhya-Yogin disciplines himself by following some set of yogic practices, like, for instance, the *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, in order to achieve *kaivalya*. The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara too would appear to be a path philosophy if we focus on his path of threefold discipline: *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. But, in my view, ultimately, as *mokṣa* for the Vedāntins is achieved all of a sudden—by making a leap—so is *kaivalya* for the Sāṃkhya-Yogin.

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'IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO'

Nandini Iyer

Abstract

This article argues that the opposition between Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta is not an irrevocable either/or dichotomy. The claim that it is necessary to choose one and only one system need not be accepted, and this is so also with regard to their apparently irreconcilable metaphysical and ontological truth-claims. Both Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta have their theoretical strengths and weaknesses. Each has its advantages and provides useful starting points in, and connecting links with, the everyday world of the ordinary person. Each offers a relatively coherent and insightful view or explanatory system dealing with matters of ultimate concern, and each attempts to answer the questions that inevitably arise for any individual engaged in a spiritual quest. The article concludes that in the final analysis, we cannot expect any conceptual metaphysical system to be able to express the Absolute Truth or reveal to us the infinite mysteries of the ineffable, indescribable Ultimate Reality.

It is customary among students and scholars of Indian philosophy to regard the metaphysics and ontology of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and of Vedānta (especially Advaita Vedānta) as completely incompatible with each other, as totally contradictory systems. The obvious if simplistic conclusion we are inclined to draw from this is that, accepting the basic laws of logic—the law of (non)-contradiction and the law of excluded middle—one system must be true or right and the other false or wrong. Of course, we are willing to grant that the one we are inclined to regard as basically true has its difficulties, problems and weaknesses; and equally we may be willing to concede, however guardedly, that the system we reject has its (relative) merits and even insights. But these qualifications and small concessions we reluctantly grant are trivial when compared with our adamant assertions that only one of them can really, ultimately, be right, essentially true.

Such claims to exclusive truth are made vigorously and repeatedly by the different schools of Western philosophy. Efforts to bring together and reconcile different and opposing schools of philosophy,

e.g., the attempt by Kant to reconcile rationalism and empiricism, however brilliant, are usually either rejected by each side as somehow distorting or inadequate, or regarded by both sides as interesting and unusual philosophical developments but not really successful solutions to the opposition. This approach to the differences and seeming opposition between trends, movements and philosophical explanations or schools has been generally accepted as appropriate to the study of Indian thought, not only by Western scholars but often even by Indian thinkers. The well-known and frequently noted opposition between the philosophical schools of Sāṃkhya-Yoga on the one hand and Vedānta or Uttara Mīmāṃsā on the other is an obvious case in point.

The point I wish to make in this paper is that the opposition between these two schools is not the irrevocable either/or dichotomy it is usually assumed to be. We need not accept the demand that we must choose decisively, once and for all, between the two, especially in relation to their apparently irreconcilable metaphysical and ontological truth-claims. We do not have to choose one and completely reject the other, and we can do this without being accused of being illogical or irrational; without being called indecisive, weak sit-on-the-fencers; without being derided as fuzzy-minded, unphilosophical syncretists with no comprehension of the strict demands of philosophical principles.

Ancient Indian (especially Hindu) thought has always held, in a variety of contexts, to the view that it is possible for two apparently opposite theories to be both true at the same time, although in different contexts, fields or levels of knowledge, world views, conceptual or categorial frameworks, etc. Indian children are routinely brought up on stories and fables such as that of the six blind men and the elephant and are given simple examples showing, for instance, how even an ordinary material object can be looked at, and described from, six main points of view in space. Each description can be true from its own point of view, however different it is from other equally true descriptions, depending on the spatial location of the perceiver in relation to the object.

We should not dismiss lightly the fact that the six main classical schools of philosophy are traditionally known as '*darśana-s*'—a term that, roughly translated, means 'points of view.' By and large, Western scholarship, while acknowledging that this was the term used for the six schools, and while conceding that these philosophical schools

are not really ‘schools’ of philosophy in the same sense that Western schools of philosophy are, has still paid only lip service to the idea. Perhaps it is thought the ancient Hindu thinkers simply felt compelled to live up to the all-embracing and indecisive character of Indian thought and life; they covered up their very real differences by saying they were only differing points of view.

The notion of complementary *darśana*-s, as opposed to that of competing schools of philosophy, needs, I believe, to be taken very seriously. No doubt, the bitter rivalries, cantankerous arguments, exclusive claims to truth and so on that we find among later proponents of these philosophies do seem to belie the original belief in relative points of view. But the basic connotation of ‘*darśana*’ still subtly underlies the field of Indian philosophy as well as the Hindu world-view.

This idea of ‘points of view’ is what I wish to apply to the opposition between Vedānta (specifically Advaita Vedānta) and Sāṃkhya-Yoga—schools whose metaphysical doctrines in particular are seen as sharply opposed and mutually incompatible. I am aware that Larson and some other scholars are unhappy about speaking of ‘Sāṃkhya-Yoga’ as if the two could be seamlessly joined together without doing injustice to each of the two; Larson, e.g., disapproves¹ of Dasgupta’s titling a chapter in his classic work on Indian philosophy, ‘The Kāpila and the Pātañjala Sāṃkhya (Yoga).’² However, while recognizing this as a legitimate critical concern, I propose, for the purposes of this brief paper, to deal with the two together, though obviously not as one two-aspected school. Since I am dealing mainly (though not entirely) with the metaphysics of the two ‘rivals’, I feel justified in taking this approach. To some extent, of course, epistemology is involved, but epistemology is often metaphysically theory-laden.

One does not in the least have to support any theory that all truths and truth in general are relative in the sense that they are purely subjective, i.e. depending on the viewpoint only of the observer or perceiver. We can allow for some kind of ‘absolutism’ and some

¹ See Gerald J. Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya* 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), 36.

² Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) Vol. I, p. 208.

sort of objectivism, and yet hold that, to some degree, truths are relative to the world-view of which they are a part, relative to a set of given assumptions and presuppositions and relative to a conceptual framework which is built upon and around a particular set of categories. Different world-views, conceptual frameworks and category systems can and do overlap; but there may be subtle differences, even in the overlapping, which are easy to overlook. Thus, two systems of thought may seem to share certain important categories, but there may be differences in what exactly these categories mean and imply and what degree of importance they have in their respective frameworks. Or, two different systems of thought may use the same categories and terms but ask very different questions about them. This would involve both the nature and lines of thought *from* outside the categories, so to speak, *to* the categories, or *starting from* the categories the trains of thought may move *outwards* towards other ideas. The two lines or directions of thought could change the status and the essential or contextual meaning of a category. Different systems of thought may be built for different purposes and so may look at the same area of knowledge or the same concepts in a different way; they may ask very different questions, for example, about the same facts, phenomena or concepts. A very general term such as 'human being' will raise very different questions for the philosopher, for the biologist and for the psychologist. Or the concept of 'knowing,' or 'perceiving,' or 'mind' may be approached and understood very differently by a neurologist, a cognitive psychologist, a philosophical epistemologist. Such concepts are basic, after all, precisely because they are so open-ended and fluid.

Applying this to the opposition between Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta, we could begin by looking at the concepts of *puruṣa* and *ātman*. Both terms, in a broad and general sense, refer to the self—the true, real self of each human being. (I am confining myself here to the nature of humanity). The differences are obvious, at least in the later well-defined and developed philosophical systems. In the earlier versions of Sāṃkhya, *puruṣa* is referred to as *ātman* and *paramātmān*—*ātman* simply in the sense, of course, of a self.³ But in classi-

³ Ibid., 214.

cal Sāṃkhya, while the *puruṣa* is the true *ātman* of a human being in the ordinary sense of the idea of self, it is not the *ātman* of Vedānta. The *puruṣa*-s are separate, individual selves, and have been so from eternity and will remain so for ever. There is no question of their being in reality part of one indivisible spiritual self, as the *ātman* is in Advaita Vedānta. *Puruṣa*-s are completely and forever apart. One point of similarity between the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *puruṣa* and the Vedāntic *ātman* is that each of them is regarded as a *sākṣin* or witness. But it is difficult to understand how *puruṣa* can be a witness. Both *puruṣa* and *ātman* are pure consciousness and do not need an object to be regarded as such, Indian philosophy holding to the notion that it is possible to have a pure, contentless consciousness that does not, logically, conceptually, or metaphysically, need an object of which it is conscious in order to *be* consciousness itself. The Self is not an object of consciousness but always remains a subject-consciousness—unless, as in Vedānta, the Self turns back, so to speak, on Itself in pure self-reflection. But whereas the Vedāntic *ātman* is pure consciousness by and in itself, it can also be seen as pure or absolute truth and absolute knowledge, and therefore can also plausibly be regarded as the source of pure intelligence, and therefore is also the source of finite intelligence and of that principle which enables us to know—‘know’ in the sense of ordinary subject/object knowledge. Since *ātman* (as identical with Brahman) itself can be, and is, the only possible source of any object of knowledge, we can speak of *ātman* as a knower, as being involved in what we call knowing. Above all, *ātman*, as the pure Self and pure consciousness, is the ultimate basis for self-consciousness, one’s sense of selfhood, the irremovable and irreducible sense that ‘I am I’—at whatever level that occurs. Indeed, since there is nothing else to know, *ātman* as consciousness is both the knower and the known, subject and object. This is the condition of the individual who has fully realized *ātman*. This condition is also described as the *jīvanmukta* having risen beyond the subject/object dichotomy into the realm of pure Oneness.

The Sāṃkhyan *puruṣa*, on the other hand, is pure consciousness and nothing else. Neither intelligence nor knowledge can in any way be ascribed to it. The principle of intelligence and the capacity for knowledge are to be found not in the *puruṣa* but in *buddhi*, which is the primary product or evolute of *prakṛti*. But how can anyone or anything be regarded as a witness if he, she or it does not possess

the capacity to know? Being the witness of something implies a degree of knowledge, or at least the capacity to know—processes and capacities not found in the *puruṣa*.⁴

Vedānta finds the substance duality of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga to be totally untenable from a purely philosophical point of view. Vedānta's objections to Sāṃkhya-Yoga's metaphysical or ontological dualism are, in general, similar to those found in the Western philosophical tradition, e.g. against Cartesian dualism. 'Substance' in philosophy is usually understood as something that is the substratum of all phenomena, on which everything else depends for its existence, but which is itself an independent existence, that which is not a property but that in which properties inhere. The authority of the Upaniṣads is frequently invoked by Vedānta, and these on the whole affirm the existence of only one independent substance. Vedānta, appealing not only to *śruti* but also to reason and logic, appeals to the principle of Occam's razor to insist on the necessary existence of only one substance. In this, Vedānta seems to employ primarily a deductive method. It therefore not only believes in one ultimate 'substance' but regards it as the only real existence or independent substance. There cannot possibly be more than one ontological ultimate reality. The manifold of phenomenal existence must, somehow, be explained in terms of, in relation to, or as dependent on, the one substance.

Even if the two ultimate substances of Sāṃkhya-Yoga are not infinite, the problems of a radical metaphysical and ontological dualism remain. Since, by definition, a substance is completely independent of everything else, it cannot be acted upon by, or affect, any other substance. Given the definition of substance, any kind of interaction is not only empirically but logically impossible. This applies to dualism on the cosmic as well as on the individual level. We are all familiar with the difficulties that Descartes faced with his mind-body dualism. Descartes himself was uneasy about his dualism, and did try to explain away some possible mis-constructions of it. He says about himself as a thinking self, 'I am *not* lodged in my body like a pilot in a vessel.' But this does not really help, for we want to ask, 'Then what *is* it like?' Sāṃkhya-Yoga's analogy of the case

⁴ See Larson, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

of the lame man and the blind man is of no greater help. (They are, after all, both men, alike in substance, though with different qualities, and can communicate with and touch each other). And even Yoga's Īśvara cannot be brought in to help, since he has no power to bring *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* together, especially as Īśvara himself is pure spirit, albeit the *Mahāpuruṣa*. It is interesting to note that a few later Cartesians were driven in desperation to propose the absurd theory known as Occasionalism.

What we need to remind ourselves of, however, is that Sāṃkhya-Yoga, while concerned of course with ontology, seems to be also concerned with the way the world and its phenomena are essentially seen by the ordinary individual. Our everyday experiences do not point to a unity of any kind. I experience everything essentially as a contrast, a separateness, between myself and other people, and between myself as the observer and knowing subject and the rest of the world as the observed and as the known object. Each of us definitely feels the distinction between mind and body. Sāṃkhya-Yoga addresses itself to this taken-for-granted-by-everyone duality. The system seems to want to produce not only a prescriptive but a descriptive metaphysics as well.⁵

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga assumption of the self is, then, that of everyday experience, that of a self that essentially needs other separate selves and things in order to define itself. In fact, the phenomenal self *must* have other selves even to know itself as a 'self'. To have the basic sense we all take for granted that 'I am me', the existence and presence of other selves as separate is required. It is not only things or objects that I need but also other persons—not just to support my sense of selfhood but even to have the basic feeling of being a self, myself. The subject-object distinction is the ground of our experience of the world, and therefore must necessarily be the ontological assumption on the basis of which philosophical exploration of the self and the world begins.

If we examine a little more closely our everyday experience of 'self' consciousness, i.e., the way we look at ourselves, my experience of being me involves being myself and no one else, and so is also the experience of being unique. And yet this experience is simply

⁵ See P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), 9.

a bare feeling of myself rather than a thought that involves considering myself as a self with certain attributes, properties, qualities that would help as identifying references, or that would distinguish me *from* other people and *for* other people. These more complex ways of seeing myself are *thoughts*, already a step away from the simple *feeling* of being myself. They would also be more self-consciously reflective thoughts of what kind of person I am, which I might confide to a friend or to a psychiatrist and so on. But they are secondary to the primary, fundamental, direct and non-intellectual awareness of myself that underlies my whole life, throughout all its changes. This utterly simple, basic and universal experience, a non-rational (but not irrational) experience, is what Sāṃkhya-Yoga seems to take extremely seriously and makes the starting point, the basis, of its philosophy and the core of the *puruṣa* concept.

When I consider myself as simply being myself as opposed to the other, the universe of others includes not only other persons (*puruṣa*-s) but other objects, material objects. What I can have *direct* (as opposed to indirect) experience of in the case of other people, i.e., the simplest and most basic way in which they are the objects of my subjective perception and experience and understanding, is perceiving their bodies, their facial expressions, their gestures, their observable habits, their speech, etc. So they, too, as objects in my world can, for some purposes, be put in the same class as physical objects and phenomena. After all, I cannot really know what it is or would be like to be another self, devoid of all attributes and qualities, in the same way that I am aware of being myself. We could say that to assert otherwise would involve us in a self-contradiction, since for Sāṃkhya-Yoga the basic fact of being a self, a soul, a *puruṣa* is that I am unique and I cannot possibly *be* someone else. I can, of course, put myself in another's place or imagine myself (in a limited sense) being someone else in terms of that individual's qualities, attributes, situations in life, etc., which are merely phenomenal adjuncts of the pure self.

On the basis of this line of thought, Sāṃkhya-Yoga understandably classifies intellects, minds, feelings, the sense of egoism as being not-self, non-*puruṣa*, and therefore *prakṛti*. The *bhāva*-s therefore are characteristic of *buddhi*, as are the *guṇa*-s. These are what we can understand and know as objects of knowledge, so they are not, and cannot be, part of the *puruṣa*. Perhaps it is because when we say we know or understand other people it is *similar to* (though not the same

as) saying that I understand material objects or sensory phenomena, i.e. in terms of their observable qualities and behaviour, that it seems to Sāṃkhya-Yoga natural and logical to say that knowledge, understanding and other cognitive faculties and processes belong to the *buddhi*, a product of *prakṛti*, and cannot be attributed to, or affirmed in any way of, the *puruṣa*. This is not a particularly good line of reasoning; but it is understandable, given Sāṃkhya-Yoga’s assumptions and basic stance, why it would go in this direction.

The teleology and soteriology of Sāṃkhya-Yoga are that, while *prakṛti* is said to manifest itself and involve itself in a complex pattern of evolution, it does this entirely for the sake of *puruṣa*, to serve the ends and purposes of *puruṣa*. And yet the question as to how or why *puruṣa*, if it is initially completely uninvolved with and unrelated to *prakṛti*, gets ‘involved’ (if that is the right word) in the whole process of manifestation, is never answered—in fact, it is hardly raised at all. Another puzzling feature is that, in actual fact, *puruṣa* is not really caught up in *prakṛti*.⁶ It only appears to be so to the ignorant *buddhi*. So *puruṣa* does not need to be freed. *Buddhi*, on the other hand, gets enmeshed in *avidyā*, ignorance, and believes itself to be a conscious entity, whereas, being a product of *prakṛti*, it is by definition, by its very nature, incapable of being conscious, even though it is the intellect and is said to be capable of knowing. It is *buddhi* that needs to be delivered from its own illusions and false beliefs. When *buddhi* knows that it is completely separate from *puruṣa*, the conscious Self, and that it has no consciousness of its own and only reflects that of *puruṣa*, it dissolves back into the primordial *avyakta prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is now free. And yet, one wonders—if *buddhi* is that which is caught in ignorance and *buddhi* is that which frees itself (without any help from *puruṣa*), why is the whole complex deployment of *prakṛti* through differentiation and manifestation, the whole cosmic ‘dance’, necessary at all? And why, above all, is the process said to be for the purpose and sake of the *puruṣa*? The *puruṣa* is never

⁶ Karl Potter interprets Īśvarakṛṣṇa as affirming that the *puruṣa* confuses itself with *prakṛti*. See Karl Potter, *Presuppositions of India’s Philosophies* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), 108. Dasgupta, however, takes the view that while Sāṃkhya attributes *avidyā*, non-discrimination and confusion, to *buddhi* alone, Yoga regards the *puruṣa* itself as somehow involved in the non-discrimination and confusion. S. N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*: Abridged by R. R. Itgarwal & S. K. Jain (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1969) 72.

truly bound and therefore needs no release. *Puruṣa* really cannot even 'see' the dance. It is *buddhi*, not *puruṣa*, that is, if anything, released from its ignorance, but it releases itself; *puruṣa* can do nothing for it. Interestingly, if one considered the nature of *mukti* or release in some of the other systems, where it means that the spirit or soul merges back into the universal Oneness, the state of *avyakta*, the Supreme Spirit, then Sāṃkhya-Yoga offers the opposite view. It is the material *buddhi*, born of the primordial homogeneity of *pradhāna* or *prakṛti*, that loses its separateness and merges back into the unmanifest from which it came, and *puruṣa* is left in its original separateness.

Perhaps this explanation of the 'liberation' of *buddhi* is thought to follow from the doctrine of the oneness of primordial *prakṛti*. And this doctrine perhaps is seen as simply an explanation of the scripturally affirmed doctrine of the dissolution of the manifested universe at *pralaya* back into the One unmanifest reality.⁷ If, as is suggested by some scholars, including Larson,⁸ some of the early formulations of what later became classical Sāṃkhya were intended to be simple, scientific accounts of the evolution of the material, phenomenal universe, then one can see the thrust and purpose of the Sāṃkhya view. For in that case the soteriological explanation of the ultimate fate of the *puruṣa* comes as a kind of postscript or addendum, just as the idea of the *puruṣa* itself was probably a later addition.⁹ The Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism avoids a charge of reductionism, but only at the price of raising other kinds of serious philosophical questions and problems.

The dualism that Sāṃkhya-Yoga affirms is a rather odd and puzzling kind of dualism—not the usual sort of Cartesian mind-body opposition, but the distinction or gap that exists between spirit on the one hand and the psycho-mental-physical self on the other. But again, perhaps this, too, can be explained in terms of the whole purpose and point of view of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *darśana* mentioned earlier, viz., the practical ordinary-world point of view as the starting point. Since the *śruti*, especially the Upaniṣads, repeatedly point out that the true spiritual Self is not to be confused with the mind or the psychological self, it is crucial on the path of liberation to sep-

⁷ See Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 181.

⁸ Larson, *op. cit.*

⁹ Larson, *op. cit.*

arate the Self and its identity from these aspects as well as from the body. Of course, Vedānta and most of the Upaniṣads manage to do this without resorting to extreme dualism.

Leaving aside Sāṃkhya for a moment, and considering only Yoga, we do not question its essentially practical character, and, in fact, it is because it is so much concerned with practice that it has relied so heavily for its metaphysics on Sāṃkhya theory. At the same time, it has been pointed out by many scholars that whichever system of Indian philosophy we are looking at, it must always be remembered that, apart from the purely philosophical and intellectual content of any system, there is always the concern with *praxis*. It does not matter whether that practice involves meditation and other forms of acquiring *jñāna*, devotion, religious ritual, adhering to Veda-prescribed ceremonies, *dharma* according to the *śāstra*-s, ethical behaviour in its general form (as in the *Bhagavad Gītā*), duties to humanity in general (*sādhāraṇa dharma*), etc. In other words, philosophical systems have their pure metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, logic, dialectics, methods of argument, and so on, but the end or purpose is always soteriological. The salvation of the soul, or, more correctly, the attainment of *mokṣa* (or at least supreme happiness of some kind) is the goal. *Theoria* is not sufficient by itself; salvific practice is also required. These systems disagree sharply regarding metaphysical and ontological theories about the ultimate nature of Reality, God or even the existence of God; very different views are held about the nature of the soul, the state of *mokṣa*—even as to whether it is ‘attained’ or ‘realised’. They do not agree in their epistemology, or the meaning of causation. And yet they can and do agree often about the *general* method and means of salvation. The emphasis on practice and the general discipline of Patañjali Yoga, for example, is readily accepted by Vedāntins of various sorts as well as by adherents of other orthodox philosophical schemes. They are quite comfortable with the inclusion of Rāja Yoga meditation, the *yama*-s and *niyama*-s and the general importance given to developing virtues, the practice of *dharma* and *svadharma*, *pratyāhāra*, the necessity of *viveka* and *vairāgya*. These are all accepted by the non-Sāṃkhya-Yoga classical systems as crucial in the practice of Hindu *sādhana*.

How can this apparent paradox be resolved? After all, if two systems disagree about the nature of Reality; if even the ontological status of the world is described in radically different ways—if all this is the case, then how can followers of such diverse views possibly

subscribe to the prescription for, or at least the general way of, achieving salvation? But they can accept the general rules for a life of practical spiritual discipline. Here the attitude of the systems seems to be very practical, almost utilitarian—the point is, the overall practical method works.

This is where the idea mentioned earlier about the possibility of a plurality of metaphysical viewpoints co-existing simultaneously becomes relevant. After all, conceptual frameworks of the world are exactly that—conceptual. Each system is a set of claims grounded in certain internally unquestionable assumptions and based on a set of categories seen as the obviously appropriate categories in terms of which reality can be ordered and understood. What is considered as ‘true’ depends on the basic presuppositions we start with. It has been pointed out by contemporary philosophers that what counts as a ‘fact’, what it means to be ‘real’, can vary with a framework. Basic terms such as these do not have commonly accepted, hard-and-fast definitions. They are indeterminate, fluid and open-ended. The assumptions we start with and our primary categories are already theory-laden. What we consider to be knowledge or what we claim we know, what we perceive, what we say we experience, are all, to a great extent (but not entirely) relative to our conceptual framework. Kant believed that our perceptions are dependent on our basic categories, our conceptual framework, or what he referred to as ‘forms of intuition.’ We order and organise the world around us through concepts. What we ordinarily call ‘meaning’ is not inherent in ‘facts,’ however we may define them; it lies in the mental and psychological ordering and organizing of them and their relation to other elements in our categorial framework. Importance and significance are what *we* attach to them. So two individuals with different world-views and conceptual frameworks may see the world differently, for each approaches it from his own point of view. Our statements about the world, facts, experiences, are, after all, expressed in language, and language is dependent on concepts and their relationships, i.e., conceptual frameworks. Our experiences, and our descriptions of them, are concept-mediated.

From this it follows that two apparently very different views of the world can be held to be true in the context of different conceptual frameworks. We do not necessarily have to say that one is *absolutely* true and the other *absolutely* wrong. Of course this does not mean that we should accept any and every description of the world

as true, 'because it belongs to its own conceptual framework.' As human beings we do have basically common elements in our physiological, mental and psychological make-up. World-views and conceptual frameworks, to be intelligible *as* points of view, must overlap to a greater or lesser extent. There *are* certain beliefs and ideas that we could agree to dismiss as false, or at least as very unlikely to be true. No other human being's view-point could be as totally unintelligible to us as, for instance, that of another species. As Wittgenstein remarks in the *Philosophical Investigations*, 'If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.'¹⁰

This acceptance of the category-dependent nature of our descriptions of the world does not imply a complete relativism on all matters. We have seen that it certainly does not imply a wholly subjective view of truth; nor does it mean that no view of the world can be rejected, either wholly or in part, as false. We certainly do not *have* to accept, e.g., moral relativism.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta both believe that the 'True Self', each person's true identity, lies in that which is the locus of pure consciousness—*puruṣa* in the one case, *ātman* in the other. But once again each system approaches it from a different point of view. As pointed out earlier, Sāṃkhya-Yoga chooses to view it essentially from the standpoint of our ordinary, everyday experience of separation between consciousness and matter and of the separation between oneself and others. These experiences are not to be lightly dismissed, and, as we saw, are crucial in helping an individual to examine life more deeply from the point at which he or she stands, without having, from the start, to question radically, and all at once, everything we take for granted and believe in. How would it help to pull the rug out from people's feet suddenly? And, from the moral point of view, as we saw, Sāṃkhya-Yoga, by not regarding the entire phenomenal world as *māyā*, helps to make the moral life more comprehensible and easier to practise.

Vedānta, by contrast, seems to believe that, to gain spiritual knowledge, we need to begin to walk the path that is 'like a razor's edge', by questioning immediately our whole approach to the world, to life. This does not mean that we will be able to see the invalidity of our

¹⁰ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (London: Basil Blackwell, 2001), 190e.

usual assumptions and presuppositions, the fallibility of our most cherished ordinary beliefs, all at once. But we should become aware that there is something seriously and radically wrong with our taken-for-granted, 'common sense' views of the world, our value system, our ordering of issues, goals and ideals, our principles of living and the principle of separateness on which we ground our thoughts and behaviour. We may then proceed gradually to straighten out and undo the kinks and knots in our thinking bit by bit. Here Vedānta offers us the consoling doctrine that the world is *not* completely unreal or non-existent. It is only *relatively* so. After all, with Brahman as its ground, how could it be completely false or illusory? It is not so much the world itself, as our perception of it, that is the illusion. The doctrine of *adhyāsa* allows us to hope that we can recognise the superimposition and remove it, since we are ourselves essentially the light of the pure consciousness that can dispel the darkness of ignorance and illusion. And further, we are assured that it is not a question of there being a sharp distinction and gap between the lowest (or greatest) level of illusion and absolute, Ultimate Truth or Reality.

The principle of sublation (or subration, as Deutsch calls it),¹¹ is at the core of the doctrine of *māyā* and of the doctrine of the attainment of the highest *jñāna*. Larson complains that Śaṅkara creates too sharp a dichotomy between *vidyā* and *parāvidyā*, or 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' knowledge, so that the very concept of 'knowing' loses meaning. However, at the same time, Larson maintains that in Sāṃkhya 'salvation-knowledge' is quite different from ordinary knowledge.¹² I see very little difference here (as far as the gap or 'leap' is concerned) between the systems. Moreover, the Vedāntin theory provides, through the process of sublation, by which we go from lower and more limited truths to higher and more general or more inclusive or more universal truths, a more satisfactory explanation of our progress towards the highest knowledge. Besides, the distinction between the higher and lower knowledge is not really between two levels of knowledge in the ordinary sense, but between two different *ways* of knowing. Higher knowledge is not the sum of all the types of lower knowledge, nor is Absolute Truth the final step in a con-

¹¹ Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta Reconstructed* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1969).

¹² Larson, *op. cit.*, 204.

tinuous staircase of relative truth and knowledge, with the second to last step missing. It is knowledge of Brahman-*ātman*, in which the subject/object distinction is transcended. In this sense, perhaps it is true that this kind of knowing is not like ordinary knowledge. We use the word ‘knowledge’ for it simply because we have no other word for it—hardly surprising, considering that higher knowledge is ineffable, indescribable, non-conceptual. It is ‘knowledge’, if you like, in an analogous or metaphorical sense. After all, isn’t that the point mystics of all traditions have persistently made? That the knowledge of God (as many mystics, especially Christian, would call it) is in a completely different dimension, so that it can hardly even be compared with any kind of ordinary knowledge. As the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* puts it, between us and God is the cloud of unknowing, which can be pierced only by the dart of love, not by reason. Even Yoga grants that before the highest state of *nirbīja samādhi* is attained, one must pass through an indescribable *dharma-meghasamādhi*. This could not possibly be said of the knowledge or consciousness of anything else. It is knowledge *and* love, *and* being—a puzzling idea to our rational minds. Spinoza was surely very perceptive in calling it ‘*amor Dei intellectualis*’.¹³

It is Sāṃkhya-Yoga, I believe, which really takes the higher or salvation knowledge completely out of the boundaries of anything that we can possibly recognize as, or even imagine to be, ‘knowledge.’ It seems to me that knowledge which is possessed by, or is the attribute of, a substance or entity totally devoid of consciousness is a meaningless notion. The concept of knowledge rests upon, is inseparable from, and necessarily demands some connection with, an idea of consciousness. Can we make sense ordinarily, for instance, of the idea of a stone ‘knowing’ something? No. Why not? Because a stone has no consciousness. Alternatively, such a view reduces knowledge (though not consciousness) to a process explainable in terms of a very simple epiphenomenalism. But this, too, is so curious that it is hardly an explanation. Epiphenomenalism, after all, reduces the various aspects of consciousness (including knowing) to physical, chemical, neurological changes, events, processes in the physical brain. But even it does not divorce knowing from consciousness. ‘Curiouser

¹³ Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*.

and curiouser!’ as Alice would say. It may be, however, that if we are determined to limit the category of knowledge to our very common-sense notion of a process involving two elements, the knowing subject and the known object (whether the latter belongs to the physical or mental realm), then *puruṣa* can perhaps be reasonably understood as not involved with knowledge.

Vedāntins would, as we saw, also wish to regard the ‘knowledge’ ascribed to the *ātman* as very different from knowledge, whether rational or empirical, in the ordinary sense of that term. But, as we have also seen, this makes the idea of the True Self as the eternal seer and witness more comprehensible. In this philosophy, too, the True Self is not an agent who acts, but is the source from which the energy of action of the incarnated self is derived. Thus, in the famous Upaniṣadic metaphor of the two birds¹⁴—the one on the lower branch acting, the one on the higher branch simply witnessing—there is some relation between the two birds, and, most importantly, both doer and witness belong to the same species: they are both birds.

The concept of the True Self being so different in the two *darśana*-s, we might expect the two views of *mokṣa* to be different, too—and they are. For Sāṃkhya-Yoga, final release and liberation means *kaivalya*, the total isolation of each *puruṣa*, not only from any possible confusion with *prakṛti* but from every other *puruṣa*, liberated or otherwise. The *puruṣa* remains what it has, in a sense, always been—a pure, clear, transparent locus or center of consciousness, untouched, stainless, unknowing, contentless, attributeless, without relation of any kind. It simply *is*. Above all, it remains wrapped in its simple selfhood, in splendid solitude, unaware of anything, unknowing even of its own selfhood. There is no question of peace, no question of bliss, for happiness and pleasure are *bhāva*-s experienced only by *buddhi*. In some ways this isolated *puruṣa* is somewhat reminiscent of a much later Western philosophical view—Leibniz’s theory of the ‘windowless monad’. Leibniz’s monad, however, although not directly perceiving other monads, nevertheless reflects the universe ‘from its own point of view’ and certainly reflects God, the Supreme Monad, to some degree, and therefore, indirectly, other monads. The Leibnizian monad is also capable of knowledge, perception and apperception.

¹⁴ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, IV, 6.

It is not completely cut off from others, and of course there is no dualism of any kind involved here. If motivation to strive for *mokṣa* is required and the beginning of the journey has to be in the world as an ordinary individual understands and experiences it, it is hard to see what enticement the Sāṃkhya-Yoga view of *mokṣa* the final state, can offer—alone, without happiness, without knowledge, wrapped for ever in a cold solitude that would seem to be more a 'hell' of loneliness than a 'heaven' to be ardently sought. Even if one agreed with Sartre that 'Hell is other people,' one would hardly find such a goal, a '*summum bonum*', particularly appealing.

Here, perhaps, we begin to see the difficulties of the idea of a plurality of selves. Earlier it was suggested that perhaps the reason why Sāṃkhya-Yoga insists on the basic assumption of many separate selves is that this view conforms more readily to our everyday experience of the world as full of many different people, many separate selves. But normally we are quite ready to concede that while each one of us is unique in some sense, we also have much in common with each other—not merely as physical bodies but as minds or 'souls.' Here Sāṃkhya-Yoga makes a radical departure from our ordinary view. For the *puruṣa*-s cannot affect or communicate directly either with each other or with the intellect made of *prakṛti*. This in turn entails, as earlier observed, that the connection or relationship is solely between forms of *prakṛti*.

This view begins to skirt dangerously close to solipsism. If all that I, as an intellect and mind, can have direct access to is other people's bodies and their behaviour, and I can only indirectly connect with people's minds and feelings through their speech and outward expressions, through bodily behaviour, movements, changes in appearance, etc., then how do I know with certainty that there is really a *puruṣa* whose consciousness is reflected in, and by, evolutes of *prakṛti*? I *know* only in my own case; with regard to others I can only make inferences with, at best, a high degree of truth probability. We are back with the old problem of 'the ghost in the machine' or, as in Wittgenstein's example, of the beetle in the box.

Now it may be the case that one's awareness of oneself as a 'self,' an identity, is indissolubly connected with the existence of other selves, i.e. other persons. So the existence of other selves is necessary to my sense of self-identity. As a contemporary British philosopher puts it, 'If no one else existed, there would be nobody for me not to be.'

Vedānta's approach is very different from that of Sāṃkhya-Yoga. It may seem to ask the same questions but the questions come from a different point of view, and this changes the nature and point of the questions. Sāṃkhya-Yoga starts with the notion that our ordinary view of each person as a separate person is valid, but it still wishes to follow the *śruti* tradition of insisting that the true Self is not the body or the *persona*. Vedānta appears to start with the premise that the dominant theme of the Upaniṣads, that the true Self is a Universal Self, identical with, or of the same essence as, Brahman the Ultimate Reality, is absolutely true. In that case, our usual, everyday notion of the self as separate from other selves must be mistaken. This makes it clear that while both systems assume that the purpose of the spiritual quest is the discovery, the knowledge, the realisation of one's true self or identity, from the start each system has a very different conception of what this true self is essentially going to be when it is found. Moreover, Sāṃkhya-Yoga takes empirically based truths very seriously. Vedānta begins with an extreme suspicion of empirical knowledge, even though it does accept *anumāna* as a valid means of knowledge. For Vedānta, any assumption of separation as being real, in connection with either sense phenomena or the self, must be false. Reality cannot lie in the world of, or be defined as, differentiation in any form whatsoever. Reality has to be a perfect oneness, undivided, indivisible.

Thus Sāṃkhya-Yoga takes the ordinary person's views as essentially pointing in the right direction; Vedānta does not, and develops an elaborate theory of *māyā*, illusion. Even Sāṃkhya-Yoga, of course, has a theory of illusion, but far less elaborate and less all-embracing. In Sāṃkhya-Yoga, too, the true self is not exactly what we think it is, since it is not a thinking, knowing self; these are capacities of *buddhi*, or of *buddhi*, *manas* and *ahaṃkāra*, or the *antaḥkaraṇa*, i.e. *prakṛti*, when illumined by the light of the pure consciousness of *puruṣa*. The intellect and the mind are not what we take them to be, since they are not possessed of consciousness; and of course, we are also ignorant of the true nature of the phenomenal world since we do not realise that its multiplicity can be traced back to the original unitary matter-principle or *prakṛti* (which therefore in some ways takes over the status of the Vedāntic Brahman).

In some sense, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga belief in the validity of ordinary experience and our ordinary idea of the self makes it easier to understand and to take as a starting point for further investigation.

At least our ordinary language is not completely misleading. At least we can give meaning to more familiar ways of thinking, perceiving and living. Other people *are* other people and I *am* different from you; and yet eventually, of course, Sāṃkhya-Yoga does seem to lead us, starting from familiar ground, to the discovery of the true Self.

The Vedāntin would have to admit that not only is his view of reality and illusion far removed from our everyday experience, but too baffling for many people, who may be deterred from the spiritual quest simply by the utterly puzzling Vedāntic view of the phenomenal world as illusion. From the point of view of undertaking the long and difficult spiritual journey for the ordinary individual, the level of explanation and ways of approach of Vedānta have other drawbacks. The insistence by Advaita Vedānta on the absolute oneness of *ātman* and Brahman, based on the *mahāvākyāni* of the Upaniṣads such as ‘*tat tvam asi*’ and ‘*ahaṃ brahmāsmi*,’ can lead to a *hubris*, a false self-confidence and arrogance, and a consequent complacency and lack of effort. After all, if I already am Brahman, where is the need for me to exert myself to attempt to ‘reach’ Brahman? Again, if our world is the world of illusion and relativity, if duality has to be rejected and transcended, there is a temptation to fall into ethical relativism, which is the product of a serious misinterpretation of the *māyā* doctrine. In certain contexts and at a certain level it may be far healthier, perhaps even necessary, to take Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism as true. In some sense, while we live our ordinary, everyday lives, it is important that we take seriously the spirit-matter distinction. Acceptance of this basic dualism would also enable us to give the necessary and proper weight to the good/evil distinction, which could easily get blurred and slurred over through a misunderstanding of Vedānta.

When we take into consideration the view that if the existence and known presence of many persons, many selves, appears to be necessary for me to have a sense of self, and awareness of my own identity, we can see that the Sāṃkhya-Yoga theory makes a great deal of sense and may even be a required presupposition. But is the system making the pluralistic assumption because this is an undeniable fact of our everyday experiences and because there is no other way to give meaning and content to the category of ‘self’ and the concept of a person? If so, it really does not do the job. The presupposition of a plurality of selves does not help Sāṃkhya-Yoga to

validate the concept of self-identity. For to do this the individual selves must be able to have some kind of direct contact and communication with each other, and each self or person must be able to *know* other persons in some sense. (I am here deliberately using the terms 'self' and 'person' as interchangeable, which in this context and for this purpose is perfectly permissible). But Sāṃkhya-Yoga selves or *puruṣa*-s have absolutely nothing to do with each other and cannot communicate directly. Also, for the validity of the argument, persons or selves must be thought of as minds, however we define the nature of 'mind.' As Sāṃkhya-Yoga deliberately denies any such identification or connection, it slips down the slippery slope of solipsism and defeats its own purpose. As for its own arguments for an ultimate plurality of selves, Sāṃkhya-Yoga really does not offer us particularly good or valid reasons.

By contrast, Vedānta openly defies and refutes our common everyday experience of many selves. Not only that, it refuses to acknowledge a radical difference between mind and body. It goes on even further and denies the reality of our universally accepted belief in the reality (substantiality?) of the world around us. It shatters our most cherished assumptions in one fell swoop. Is the comfortably solid world just an insubstantial illusion, life an empty dream? From the start it makes us reluctant to accept such a strange, contrary-to-experience philosophy. It does, of course, seek to re-establish the reality of the self and the world, but at a higher, rarefied realm that is hard to accept as a substitute for our old familiar beliefs. In the matter of the unitary nature of the world and the self, Vedānta mainly takes refuge in the authority of the Upaniṣadic scriptures. It does offer some reasons and arguments in support of its views, but does not ultimately give great importance to them. In fact, Śaṃkara says of Brahman that it cannot be proved by reason since all language, reason and thought have Brahman as their base. It is the ground of everything—ontologically, logically, psychologically.

Gödel's (uncertainty) theorem has conclusively shown that no formal number system, staying within its own boundaries, can completely prove every truth or formula within it. The original theorem, strictly taken, is meant to apply to formal mathematical systems. Later, it was also applied to formal logical systems. However, some philosophers do apply it, loosely and in a broader sense, to conceptual frameworks or theoretical systems in general. In taking this line, therefore, Śaṃkara is, of course, quite right. No system of

thought, conceptual framework, theory or world-view can prove its own basic assumptions while staying within its own boundaries, and Brahman is the base of *all* possible conceptual frameworks. This is where I think Sāṃkhya-Yoga errs in trying to prove the existence of *mūlaprakṛti* and the *puruṣa*.

As for *ātman*, once again Śaṃkara takes the right approach in saying that the Self cannot be proved; all one can do is simply say, ‘It is.’ The *ātman* cannot be an object of any thought, except in the paradoxical sense that, for the consciousness of the liberated individual in the state of *mokṣa*, the subject/object dichotomy has been transcended, and the Self might be said to be pure Self-consciousness turned back onto itself—the Self contemplating the Self. But this is only a metaphorical use of the term ‘object.’

Interestingly, long before Descartes, Śaṃkara faced the question of whether one can prove one’s own existence. With greater perspicacity than Descartes he realised that one cannot really consider the *cogito* an argument, for even in beginning the process of proving one’s existence, one is already assuming one’s own existence. ‘I am’ or ‘I exist’ is a performatory utterance, a performative speech act¹⁵—in saying it, I am *doing* something, viz., affirming and establishing my existence. Even in order to doubt my existence, I must exist.¹⁶ In so far as the Self is reflected in the world of experience, I would maintain that Śaṃkara does seem to use something akin to the Cartesian ‘*Cogito ergo sum*’ argument, which possibly could apply to the *ātman* as well. But here, again, what Śaṃkara means is that the supreme *ātman* is the underlying ground of all forms of self-consciousness and of every thought or utterance of the empirical self. In this matter it makes sense to follow Śaṃkara’s approach. In other contexts, however, we might be better off regarding the self as having meaning in a framework involving many real selves. For instance, it would be useful in a purely empirical context, where we are dealing with the question of how the identity of a phenomenal self is defined or understood in the ordinary, phenomenal world in which we live as incarnated beings. For Śaṃkara, allowing as he does for

¹⁵ See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by Marina Sbisa & J. O. Urmson, 2nd ed. (Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁶ Śaṃkara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, II, 3, 7.

the relative validity of truths in the realm of *māyā*, there is no need to adopt a subjective idealism.

Clearly, given the ontological and other general metaphysical assumptions of the two *darśana*-s, it is evident that their view of the nature of liberation, the very meaning of the term *mokṣa*, will be different. For Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the *puruṣa*, having been 'released', so to speak, dwells in a state of *kaivalya*, total and eternal solitude. The problem with this description is that it is difficult to understand or imagine what it could mean. The *puruṣa* while still 'bound' could, in principle (if not in practice) be in some sense identified, and distinguished from other *puruṣa*-s by the fact of its 'connection' (whatever that might be) with individuated adjuncts that are identifiable limited manifestations of *prakṛti*. But once it is released, it has no 'connection', and, of course, no attributes, qualities, etc. to provide a referential identity.¹⁷ It may be unique, but, since with a *puruṣa* no uniquely identifying references are possible, how do we identify it as a unique, individual *puruṣa* distinct from other quality-less, characteristics-less *puruṣa*-s? The Leibnizian principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles shows that there is no way we can meaningfully affirm the existence of any individual *puruṣa*; they all simply become an unindividuable *puruṣa*-mass. So while the Sāṃkhya-Yoga view of many *puruṣa*-s may serve us well in certain everyday contexts, there are other contexts in which it simply fails to provide us with meaning.

Vedānta provides a very different picture of *mokṣa*. When liberation is achieved, the *ātman* can shine in all its glory through the *kośa*-s or sheaths of the enlightened *jīvanmukta*, to the fullest extent that it is possible for the *kośa*-s to reflect the light of the *ātman* in the world of *māyā*. When the *annamayakośa* and the other sheaths have finally been dissipated at death, the *ātman* remains in its purely subjective state of pure *saccidānanda*. The long, dark night of *avidyā* is over and the world of *māyā* has given way to the complete reality and oneness of Brahman. Different schools of Vedānta may vary a little, depending on whether they believe in the absolute identity and equation of *ātman* and Brahman or whether they affirm an identity-in-difference where the *ātman* merges completely into Brahman. One might, of course, say that this undifferentiated reality of Brahman is

¹⁷ See P. F. Strawson, *op. cit.*, Part I, sections 1, 2, and 3.

no more comprehensible or imaginable than the Sāṃkhya-Yoga *mokṣa*. To some extent this is true. But at least supreme bliss is attributed to *mokṣa* and there is the satisfaction of complete connectedness and identification with all others.

In any case, both descriptions of *mokṣa* are, we might say, intellectual, speculative attempts at description. Both systems admit, to some degree, that the highest truths are inexpressible and the ultimate spiritual state is indescribable. But Sāṃkhya-Yoga, by allowing for the phenomenal world to be real and describable, does not seem to subscribe to the view of the complete inability of language to describe what is real. Vedānta flatly asserts that the highest Reality is indescribable (*‘neti neti’*) and that the Absolute Truth, *paramārthikasatya* cannot be expressed in language. So the realisation of oneness with Brahman is also impossible to describe. All we can know is what the ṛṣi-s who have attained the highest truth tell us in the *śruti*, and even they speak in paradoxes, metaphors, allegories and other non-literal language that is difficult to understand. In the case of Sāṃkhya-Yoga it is also assumed that the state of *mokṣa* cannot be described and of course the quality-less *puruṣa* cannot be described. But then how do we know that the *puruṣa* exists in a state of *kaivalya*? And since when this state is attained the individual *buddhi* is dissolved back into *prakṛti*, there is no entity that could possibly know and affirm the *puruṣa*’s *kaivalya* state. It can only be inferred from the original assumption about the nature of *puruṣa*.

Since both systems would admit the impossibility of understanding or knowing *mokṣa* while still in the realm of *māyā*, we cannot take descriptions of it in the least literally. It is ineffable, indescribable. But then is there any point in trying to make conceptual distinctions between Vedāntin *mokṣa* and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga account? The Vedāntin asserts that *ātman* and Brahman are absolutely one, and therefore nothing exists apart from *ātman*; *ātman*/Brahman alone exists—there is no ‘other.’ Śaṅkara says of the *jīvanmukta*, *‘anyan na paśyati’* (‘he sees no other’ or, ‘no other is seen’). Sāṃkhya-Yoga speaks of the *puruṣa* as dwelling alone, unconnected with, unaware of, anything else (though other *puruṣa*-s do exist in a similar state). How can we, at our level of *māyā*, affirm any difference between the two kinds of ‘aloneness’?

If the Hindu world-view can allow for a plurality of religious and philosophical systems and models that are acceptable as valid, this is not because Hinduism is, at its core, an entirely relativist or

subjective philosophy. It does however believe, on the whole, in the existence of a transcendent divine Reality that is suprarational, ineffable, indescribable—‘that from which speech turns back, together with thought, unable to reach it.’ The inadequacy of conceptual thought and language in the face of the profound, immeasurable reality of the Divine is implicitly and generally accepted. Given this, all conceptual frameworks, all models—whether expressed in literal or figurative language, in myths and metaphors or visual symbols—must be relative, partial, one-sided representations of the truth. In the light of the general principles and assumptions that underlie Indian thought, it is clear that systems of philosophy as different as Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta can both be true and valid accounts of reality, each from its relative point of view. Although two such systems may partially overlap, this does not mean that we can reduce one to the other. Their unavoidable differences, even contradictions, do and must remain.

This conclusion is perfectly consistent with the fundamental assumption of both the systems we are considering, viz., that it is impossible to describe Absolute Reality in language. In the case of Advaita Vedānta, of course, this is obvious; and though it may not be quite so explicitly stated in Sāṃkhya-Yoga, it does seem to follow from what is said about *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. If discrimination and intelligence belong to *buddhi*, how can any conceptual ‘truths’ propounded by the ego-self be anything but relative? Sāṃkhya-Yoga would be forced, by its own presuppositions, to admit that all conceptually and linguistically formulated truths must be relative truths. Plato believes in the One and the world of Archetypal Ideas as real, the world of phenomena being one of images; for Aristotle the phenomenal world is real and there are many substances. Locke believes in an underlying material substance as real, while for Hume, equally an empiricist, there can be no such material substance, but only impressions and ideas. Descartes thinks there are two substances; another rationalist, Spinoza, insists on only one. We do not have to view all these systems from a supreme, transcendental and neutral view-point to allow for the possibility that each philosopher makes sense in the context of his own philosophical system, and that each, from a particular point of view, may be giving us, on the whole, a ‘true’ picture. Of course we may, even from within a system, see some of its weaknesses and shaky arguments.

To affirm that there can be several different systems all giving us, at the same time, varying and yet legitimate, 'true,' metaphysical descriptions of the world does not, as I have said, necessarily entail that there are many realities, that nothing is absolutely real, or, put less dramatically, that there is no such thing as a single, context-neutral description or account of the world, that is as the world really is. It only means that no metaphysical description of it can be outside every possible conceptual framework, but Reality itself is. Nor does it follow that any assertions about this 'real' or 'true' world beyond all conceptual frameworks, are nonsense. We need not accept a very different solution, such as that offered by Kant—that there *is* a world in which there exists the 'thing-in-itself', but that we can never directly know this world. Indian classical philosophy, since it is always connected with religion, must and does believe with complete assurance in the possibility of human beings actually attaining to a perfect knowledge of Reality—a '*scientia intuitiva*' that leads to the Divine or the Absolute Truth. The conceptual frameworks we build in the realm of rational thought are not useless just because they cannot describe Ultimate Reality. Serious examination of, reflection on, these explanatory and interpretive schemes, their differences and overlaps, are crucial to expanding and deepening our understanding of reality, even if these conceptual frameworks (any or all possible combinations and collections of them) cannot bring us the Absolute Truth. If nothing else, they enable us to understand the relativity of conceptual truths and structures, and make us see what Pascal meant when he said that the highest function of reason is to show us the limitations of reason.

I might add here that this acceptance of the relative validity of differing frameworks does not merely point to the rather simple idea, widely accepted by philosophers, that words like 'object' have very different meanings, even in ordinary language. It has also to do with the idea that basic words like 'fact,' 'exist,' 'real' have a far greater range of meaning than we see at a superficial level. A 'fact' may obviously be seen and interpreted differently, rather in the manner of a *trompe l'oeil*, an Escher drawing or, very simply, like Wittgenstein's well-known drawing of the duck/rabbit.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 166e.

Perhaps even more relevant than the straightforward visual or optical illusion examples is the story, well-known in the philosophy of religion, given by John Wisdom, about the two travellers who come across an empty garden.¹⁹ They both (literally) see the same things—flowers, shrubs, weeds, etc. But each interprets the same scene differently, seeing different connections, patterns, designs (or lack of them) and gives a different significance to the same sets of data. Each version taken by itself is plausible, but the two accounts and their conclusions are quite different, even contrary. When the ‘facts’ to be observed and interpreted are the countless strands and the ever-changing multi-layered panorama of the entire world, life itself, how can any one theory possibly be adequate or complete?

Another perplexing element in such a view of different meta-physical categorial frameworks and contextual relativity is that sometimes a particular theory describing reality or ‘how things are’ may come to be superseded by a newer theory or conceptual structure partially replacing the older. It is not so much that the earlier one is shown to be false, as that it turns out to be only a partial explanation of the way things are. The later framework or theory is more general, more complete, in the way that Einstein’s General Theory went beyond the Newtonian picture. It is not that Einsteinian physics enables us to have better or truer everyday experiences of the phenomenal world, but that it provides us with a wider and deeper understanding of what the meaning and implications are, for instance, of the concepts of space and time. For example, the implications of a space-time continuum model would be different from those of a model with space and time. This may mean we can control our physical environment better and we can build even more sophisticated theories about the nature of the physical universe.

An example of different, perhaps even seemingly contradictory theories about the same phenomenon being both true at the same time is in the field of quantum physics. Two apparently opposing models, the wave model and the particle model, are both said to be necessary and complementary. Niels Bohr asserted that ‘A complete elucidation of one and the same object may require diverse points

¹⁹ John Wisdom, ‘Gods’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 45, 1944; reprinted in *Logic and Language*, First Series, Basil Blackwell, 1951.

of view which defy a unique description.’²⁰ Elsewhere he said that the models of quantum physics are more like poetic metaphors than literal descriptions of the world. It has been argued that both the wave and the particle models are essential, even necessary. Physicists are thought to have developed ‘hunches’ as to which model is the appropriate one to use on different occasions.

There are other theories, models, examples etc., that can be given to point to this puzzling feature of world views—that each of us can accept, and even need, two (or more) very different theories in our unending quest to explain the universe around us. Other relevant theories to explain our acceptance of very disparate theories in different contexts have also been formulated. Wittgenstein had his theory of language-games, although this isn’t quite what we need to understand the complementarity of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta. Nor is our case one that comes directly under the explanation provided by a theory such as that of a paradigm shift in its strict sense.

Finally, this is where I believe that two basic Vedāntin concepts, and the theories built around them, can play a crucial role in understanding better the nature and function of metaphysical frameworks, as well as the idea of context-relative meaning and significance. These two ideas are the concept of *adhyāsa*, or superimposition, and the principle and theory of sublation, which reminds us that all theories of reality and everything we know about the world are only relatively true, and we may, if we are open-minded, suddenly see and understand things at a higher level. The theory of sublation and the view of the world as *anīrvacanīya*, enable us to see the importance of acknowledging the possibility of higher and higher levels of truth to be attained. The theory of *adhyāsa* leads us inevitably to the fact that when we ‘see’ something, we are always ‘seeing it as,’ i.e., when we ‘see’ we are always interpreting the raw material of our perception. And this is where the misinterpretation occurs; this is the point at which *māyā* comes in. We saw that our assertions about sense-experiences are mediated by our interpretations, which are expressed in terms of our implicitly assumed conceptual framework and its categories. By emphasising this, Advaita Vedānta points to a crucial feature of our ordinary knowledge.

²⁰ Niels Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 1934), 96.

Similarly, Advaita Vedānta's theory of three main epistemological levels corresponding to three levels of ontology is an extremely constructive tool, intellectually and spiritually. It points to Truth as relating to three levels of being: *paramārthika*, *vyāvahārika* and *pratibhāsika*, or Reality, the world of *māyā* that is neither completely real nor completely unreal, and the completely illusory. Above all, Advaita Vedānta admits that there is some value to the knowledge of the world. It is not totally useless. It has a relative value. By adding further the principle of sublation, the system allows for degrees of relative truth. This ensures *some* value to *vyāvahārika satya* and its many levels, and encourages us to engage in critical thought and constructive doubt and questioning at the intellectual and conceptual level. While knowledge of the world of *māyā* is of some value as long as we live in the world of *māyā*, we also, through past experience, realize that we need to rise to higher and higher levels of relative truth, even though the highest level of *vyāvahārika satya* is still only relative truth. For this reason, Advaita Vedānta would have to concede that, by its own reckoning, it cannot be the complete or only truth and that other systems may genuinely have insights to offer. Taking a very general, overall view of the two systems, their starting assumptions, and what seem to be their heuristic aims, we could, perhaps, say that Sāṃkhya-Yoga's approach appears to be to see the world *sub specie durationis*, while Vedānta would prefer us to begin immediately to see the world *sub specie aeternatis*.

Both Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta have their theoretical strengths and weaknesses; each has its advantages and provides useful starting points in, and connecting links with, the everyday world of the ordinary person. Each offers a relatively coherent and insightful view or explanatory system dealing with matters of ultimate concern, and each attempts to answer the questions that inevitably arise for any individual engaged in a spiritual quest. Proponents of each system make far-reaching claims about the truth of their own view-point and tend to deny the validity of other systems. Each tries to win votes; both seem to insist that we must choose between them, that one cannot accept, even with qualifications, the truth of the other's insights. But 'it ain't necessarily so.' We do not have to accept that Sāṃkhya-Yoga is completely wrong; we do not have to accept that Vedānta is totally untrue. Above all, we do not have to accept that it is necessary to choose one and only one system. In the final analysis, we cannot expect any conceptual metaphysical system to

be able to express the Absolute Truth or to reveal to us the infinite mysteries of the ineffable, indescribable Ultimate Reality. Perhaps the wisest course would be to agree with Wittgenstein and, admitting the finitude of our intellect, say, 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.'²¹

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²¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, trans. by D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., Second impression, 1963), proposition 7, p. 151.

THE SĀṂKHYA-YOGA INFLUENCE ON ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA PHILOSOPHY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PAÑCARĀTRA SYSTEM

P. Pratap Kumar

Abstract

One of the advantages of studying various Indian philosophical traditions historically is that it enables us to understand the influential factors in the development of different philosophical schools and their mutual dependence. While individual philosophical schools do not admit such mutual dependence, one can rarely discount the syncretistic nature of all philosophies. No Indian philosophical school was developed in isolation from the rest. It is fairly an established position that Sāṃkhya philosophy occupies the place of being one of the most ancient systems within the Indian thought. Generally several Indian philosophical traditions have borrowed and built on the fundamental philosophical categories that Sāṃkhya had provided. Vedānta, perhaps is most prolific in its borrowing from the Sāṃkhya system. In the present essay, I shall attempt to demonstrate the extent to which the Viśiṣṭādvaita system (Śrīvaiṣṇavism) had borrowed from the Sāṃkhya system in developing its many subtle aspects. One of the most interesting characteristics of this interaction is that in the hands of the Vaiṣṇava philosophers of the south, some of the Sāṃkhya abstract categories have been deified and given personal characteristics. One such category is the notion of *'nitya-vibhūti'* which in effect is the transformed idea of what is known in Sāṃkhya as *pure sattva*. *Nitya-vibhūti* in Śrīvaiṣṇavism is the transcendental realm which is beyond the material creation of Prakṛti.

The transformation of abstract notions into personified deities or entities is nothing peculiar to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. One would find such attempts in other religious traditions of India as well. As Rajeshwari Datta notes,

There is ample evidence to show that during the reign of the Buddhist Pāla kings of Bengal (eighth-twelfth centuries A.D.), Tantric Buddhism—with its Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna, and finally Sahajayāna forms—spread widely, eclipsing Mahāyāna Buddhism, which seems to have been current earlier. In the process of this development, that is, under Tantric influence, the fundamental ideas of Mahāyāna philosophy had undergone a great change. The final state of *nirvāṇa* or *bodhicitta* (perfect

enlightenment)—to be realised by the union of the two principles thought of either as *śūnyatā* (pure void) and *karuṇā* (universal compassion) or as *prajñā* (perfect knowledge) and *upāya* (means of attainment)—was now reconceptualised as the final state of *mahāsukha* (supreme bliss), the state of the *sahaja* (spontaneous)-realisation; and *prajñā* and *upāya*, as the two aspects of the absolute reality, came to be symbolised as the male and the female. To attain this unique state of bliss arising out of the union of the two, the Buddhist Sahajīyās also adopted esoteric physio-psychological yogic practices as an integral part of their *sahaja-sādhana* (*sādhana* = discipline).¹

This Tantric Buddhism in the form of Buddhist Sahajīyā cult has preceded the Vaiṣṇava Sahajīyā cult in Bengal. There is a general Sahajīyā ethos to which both the Buddhist Doha poets and the Vaiṣṇava Baul poets belong to, in so far as they both made love as the basis of their religion. Shashibhusan Dasgupta says,

This spirit of heterodoxy and criticism that characterises the Buddhist and the Jaina songs and Dohas is very noteworthy phenomenon in the history of the vernacular literature of India; for here we find the inception of a new type of literature, which grew abundantly in many parts of India during the medieval period, and the type is not extinct even in modern times. This type of literature is generally known as Sahajīyā or the Maramīyā school of literature. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajīyās of Bengal and the host of village poets roughly known under the general name of Bāul belong to the same school of thought.²

It is perhaps characteristic of the Tantric system to transform the abstract dualisms into personified dualisms as male-female. This sort of reconceptualisation happens in the Pāñcarātra philosophy under the influence of the Tantric tradition. The Sāṃkhya dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are reconceptualised as Viṣṇu and Śrī-Lakṣmī in whom the six auspicious qualities exist in equal measure. In other words, the Tantric system's propensity toward more practical methodology together with the fundamental dualism of Sāṃkhya system have provided the essence of Śrīvaiṣṇava theological doctrine of Viṣṇu and Śrī-Lakṣmī. No matter how much the formative teachers of South Indian Vaiṣṇavism drew from the classical Vedānta texts in constructing the philosophy of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, its theology most certainly

¹ Rajeshwari. Datta, 'The religious aspects of the Bāul songs of Bengal', in *Journal for Asian Studies*, Vol. xxxvii, No. 3, May 1978, p. 445.

² Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1976), 60–61.

is rooted in the Pāñcarātra tradition, which has already appropriated both the Sāṃkhya dualism and the Tantra practical ritualism.

The Philosophy and Theology of Śrīvaiṣṇavism

In order to understand the influence of Sāṃkhya-Yoga on Śrīvaiṣṇavism, it is perhaps necessary to outline the basic philosophical and theological principles that it presupposes. Most scholars of Vaiṣṇavism, especially those who are trained in India separate the philosophical and theological principles when they discuss the details. The debate whether the Indian traditions are primarily philosophies or theologies and whether a separation between the two is essential to understand the Indian traditions is a different one and I shall not engage in it within the confines of this essay. However, I shall simply point out the obvious tendencies among scholars, viz., western scholars such as J. B. Carman have described Rāmānuja's work as 'theology' and hence the title of his book *The Theology of Rāmānuja*.³ On the other hand, Indian scholars tend to separate the two—philosophy and theology. For instance, S. M. Srinivasa Chari uses a subtitle to do the separation: *Vaiṣṇavism: its philosophy, theology and religious discipline* (1994).

Having pointed out the separation of philosophy and theology/religion and the tendency of the western scholars to profile the theological aspects and the Indian scholarly tendency to profile the philosophical aspects of the tradition, let me outline the basic principles of both aspects. This is necessary, as pointed out above, to understand the extent to which the Sāṃkhya-Yoga traditions have come to be integral to Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

Rāmānuja, the most systematic thinker of the tradition built Śrīvaiṣṇavism on the basic premises of Vedānta. The founding documents of Vedānta philosophy have already been identified before him by scholars such as Śaṃkara. These founding documents are—the *Upaniṣad*-s,

³ J. B. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974). See also Eric J. Lott, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja: A Study in His Use of the Self-Body Analogy* (Madras: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1976), and Julius Lipner, *The Face of Truth: a study of meaning and metaphysics in the Vedāntic theology of Rāmānuja* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986).

Brahma Sūtra and the *Bhagavadgītā*. In order to situate Śrīvaiṣṇavism, which follows the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine (Qualified Non-dualism) in contradistinction to Śaṅkara's Non-dualism, in the centre of Vedānta philosophy Rāmānuja had to comment on the above three founding documents. Therefore, his starting point was the notion of Brahman. However, departing from Śaṅkara's abstract notion of Brahman, Rāmānuja chooses to characterise Brahman as the Supreme Person, who is none other than Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. And this he does on the basis of the Upaniṣadic texts, often the very same texts that scholars such as Śaṅkara have used before him. Chari points out:

The identification of Brahman with Nārāyaṇa is established on the basis of the Upaniṣadic texts by adopting the principles of interpretation laid down by the Mīmāṃsakas. According to them, when several terms are used in the same context in a passage, the words bearing the general meaning should bear the meaning of the specific word.⁴

In the context of the creation of the universe, Sat, Ātman, Brahman and Nārāyaṇa have been used in different Upaniṣadic texts. On the basis of the above principle, Rāmānuja concludes that Brahman should refer to Nārāyaṇa as the creator of the universe. Now, the obvious question is—why is it necessary for Rāmānuja to identify Brahman with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa? This question may be simple and can be answered very directly. However, it, in fact, might be the one that would enable us to unpack the presuppositions behind Rāmānuja's construction of the philosophy and theology of Vaiṣṇavism.

Among the Vaiṣṇava theologians, Rāmānuja has been credited not only with being the first systematician of the tradition, but also the one who is more philosophical in his approach. This is so not only because he wrote commentaries on only the three major philosophical founding texts (*Upaniṣad-s*, *Brahma Sūtra* and the *Gītā*), but more importantly that he chose not to deal with a host of Tamil sources which are more religious and devotional in their appeal (including the Four Thousand Hymns of the Ālvārs). It is this distance that he had created for himself between the more philosophical sources and the devotional sources of the tradition that might have earned him a place among serious philosophical thinkers of the time. But more

⁴ S. M. Srinivasa Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism: Its philosophy, theology and religious discipline* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.), 53.

importantly, from the standpoint of the tradition, he also set in motion a debate within the tradition that followed his time on whether it is the Sanskritic philosophical texts or the Tamil devotional texts that formed the more important basis of the tradition. Among other matters, this was one issue that eventually divided the tradition into two schools—southern and the northern.

Even though both schools continued to value both sources (Sanskritic and Tamil), it was a matter of emphasis for the two schools that became important. Nevertheless, both schools considered Rāmānuja as the most systematic thinker of the tradition and drew equal inspiration from his work. In the thick of the theological debates that followed after Rāmānuja, one thing that did not count very much was the fact that there was a third source that influenced the thinking of the south Indian Vaiṣṇava philosophers/theologians. Notwithstanding the fact that both schools at various levels appropriated materials from the Āgama (mainly the Pāñcarātra) texts and that Rāmānuja himself drew from some important Pāñcarātra texts, the extent to which these texts have influenced the tradition has never been fully acknowledged, even by Veṅkaṭanātha (Vedānta Deśika) who drew from them more extensively than others. The reason for this silence about the third source has often been attributed to the fact that the Āgama texts generally were seen as part of the Tantra tradition and that because the Tantra tradition has occupied a somewhat problematic position in the Indian tradition generally. Even to this day orthodox Vaiṣṇava theologians tend to shy away from the association of the Tantra tradition, in spite of their admission of the role that the Āgama texts played in the overall development of the tradition. Of course, whether or not the Āgama texts are considered Tantra texts is a moot point. Scholars, such as Sanjukta Gupta, have identified Lakṣmī Tantra, a Pāñcarātra Āgama text, as being a Tantra text.⁵ Vaiṣṇava theologians from within the tradition do not agree. While claiming the Āgama tradition as being non-Tantric and integral to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, the Vaiṣṇava theologians have made good use of those materials to develop their doctrines. Thus, in addition to the Sanskritic texts, the Tamil texts and the Āgama texts together enabled the Vaiṣṇava scholars to construct the kind of understanding of Brahman that they came to accept. Elsewhere,

⁵ Sanjukta Gupta (Tr.). *Lakṣmī Tantra: a Pāñcarātra Text* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

I have tried to demonstrate the extent to which the Pāñcarātra tradition had influenced the Vaiṣṇava theology.⁶

It would be naive to think that Rāmānuja came up with the idea of qualified Brahman just on the basis of the Sanskritic texts. A careful reading the history of the tradition will make it clear that the entire Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition that Nāthamuni, Yāmuna, Rāmānuja and their successors constructed has more to do with their location in both the Tamil tradition and the Pāñcarātra ritual tradition than with the Sanskritic Vedānta. In my view, these Vaiṣṇava theologians were first and foremost, worshippers of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. They took Brahman of the Vedānta tradition, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa of the Āḷvārs and the Goddess Lakṣmī of the Pāñcarātra ritual tradition and constructed a unique theology that is unparalleled in the Indian tradition. Therefore, Brahman of the Śrīvaiṣṇavism is not just 'it' but a personal god, namely, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who is always accompanied by his divine consort. This indebtedness to the three traditions, Vedānta, Tamil devotion of the Āḷvārs and the Pāñcarātra ritual tradition, is what makes the Śrīvaiṣṇava theology very unique.

But there is a fourth connection to which the tradition is also to be indebted in its historical development. This fourth one comes already embedded in the Pāñcarātra tradition. But it is also drawn from the larger philosophical background of the Indian tradition. This has to do with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition. In the following, I shall explore this connection more elaborately.

The dualism of Sāṃkhya-Yoga is fundamental to the Pāñcarātra tradition. This can be seen in the way the relationship between Viṣṇu and his consort, Śrī-Lakṣmī is explicated in the Pāñcarātra tradition. As I shall show in this essay, the Pāñcarātra tradition has greatly assimilated the Sāṃkhya-Yoga categories. My argument is that through the Pāñcarātra ritual tradition, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophical categories became integral to the Śrīvaiṣṇava theology. Before I go into the Sāṃkhya-Yoga influence on the Pāñcarātra tradition, let me establish some connections that the Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians had with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition itself.

The historical memory of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition claims that Nāthamuni had left a tradition of Yoga in his book, *Yogarahasya*.

⁶ P. Pratap Kumar, *The Goddess Lakṣmī: the Divine Consort in South Indian Vaiṣṇava Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997).

Unfortunately that text was not preserved. The tradition also claims that Yāmuna missed an opportunity to learn the secrets of Yoga from Kureśa/Kuruttālvān, the father of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar.⁷ But both Neevel and Mesquita⁸ have suggested that there was continuity of thought between Nāthamuni and Yāmuna. While Neevel argues that that influence of Nāthamuni on Yāmuna was *via* Nyāya tradition, Mesquita argues that it was *via* what came to be known as Pāñcarātrika Vedānta tradition.⁹ Even though Yāmuna did not have a direct connection with Yoga, his association with the ideas of Pāñcarātra tradition is certainly undisputed. His work on *Āgamaprāmāṇya* bears testimony to this. As I shall show later on in this essay, the Pāñcarātra tradition has unquestionably borrowed its central categories and philosophical background from Sāṃkhya-Yoga traditions. I, therefore, suggest that Yāmuna's contact with Sāṃkhya ideas is *via* the Pāñcarātra tradition.

As per Rāmānuja, the main systematician of the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophy, his connection with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is not direct but rather through the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, several scholars have attributed many of Rāmānuja's ideas to Sāṃkhya. Karl Potter thinks that Rāmānuja's ideas on causality and dependent relations are quite similar to that of Īśvarakṛṣṇa.¹⁰ Van Buitenen attributes Rāmānuja's cosmogony to Sāṃkhya.¹¹ Lott, however disputes that Rāmānuja simply took over the Sāṃkhya cosmology and psychology.¹² He, nonetheless, admits the influence of Sāṃkhya on Rāmānuja. But this influence, he suggests, is indirect rather than direct. He says,

Similarity of expression in various doctrines was inevitable, by reason of the influence of Sāṃkhya on Rāmānuja's basic sources, including

⁷ Bhaṭṭar succeeded Rāmānuja as the teacher of the tradition. See Walter G. Neevel, *Yāmuna's Vedānta and Pāñcarātra: Integrating the Classical and the Popular* (Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 11.

⁸ Walter G. Neevel, *Yāmuna's Vedānta and Pāñcarātra*; and von Roque Mesquita, 'Yāmuna's Vedānta and Pāñcarātra: a review' in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* (Wien). Sonderabdruck aus band XXIV, 1980, pp. 199–224.

⁹ For a more detailed discussion on this see my work (Kumar 1997: 54).

¹⁰ K. Potter, *Presuppositions in India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

¹¹ J.A.B. van Buitenen, (Tr.) *Vedārthasaṃgraha* (with Introduction and annotated translation) (Poona: Deccan College, Postgraduate Research Institute, 1956).

¹² Eric J. Lott, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja: A Study in His Use of the Self-Body Analogy* (Madras: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1976.), 105.

Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata, Gītā, Purāṇas and Pāñcarātra. The Gītā in particular was heavily indebted to the Sāṃkhya description of the cosmic process. Rāmānuja's close affinity with the Gītā's viewpoint thus meant an inevitable affinity with certain aspects of Sāṃkhya thought.¹³

Thus, the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophers have had either direct or indirect connection with Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideas. To say this is quite obvious. Virtually all Vedānta philosophers, including Śaṃkara, have had some influence of Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideas on their views. But what is unique to Śrīvaiṣṇavism is that the Pāñcarātra tradition to which it owes its most fundamental concepts and categories is already steeped in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideas which have been reworked in the Pāñcarātra system. All of the founding Śrīvaiṣṇava scholars from Nāthamuni to Rāmānuja had admitted their roots in the Pāñcarātra tradition. Aside from all the other sources that brought the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideas to bear upon the views of the founding scholars of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, it is the Pāñcarātra tradition, in my view, that has undoubtedly grounded them in a system that has reconfigured the two most fundamental categories of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, viz., Puruṣa and Prakṛti as Viṣṇu and Śrī. The Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophers were, first and foremost, Pāñcarātrika Vedāntins. Their starting point, therefore, was not Brahman of Bādarāyaṇa, but Viṣṇu and Śrī, the two dual principles of the Pāñcarātra system. It thus makes sense to see why Brahman of Vedānta Sūtras is none other than Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who is always accompanied by his divine consort, Śrī-Lakṣmī. Let me now unpack these two fundamental concepts of the Pāñcarātra system and their proximity to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideas.

Pāñcarātra and Sāṃkhya-Yoga

The most important statement regarding the connection between the Pāñcarātra and Sāṃkhya-Yoga is found in the *Mahābhārata* text (12.326.99ff) which says 'this *mahopaniṣad* connected with the four Vedas and relating to the Sāṃkhya and Yoga and therefore named Pāñcarātra.' A second statement is found in the *Parama Saṃhitā*

¹³ Ibid., 105.

(1.1.68). It calls the Pāñcarātra the ‘Yogatantra’ because it ‘deals with five qualities (*guṇa*-s) of the gross elements (*mahābhūta*-s) that are called *rātri*-s of the embodied soul; and speaks of the union of five primary elements (*pañcamahābhūta*-s), five subtle elements (*tanmātra*-s), the principle of individuation (*ahaṁkāra*), intelligence (*buddhi*), and the principle (*avyakta*) from which the material world arises. These five are called *rātri*-s of the Puruṣa. Therefore the doctrine called ‘Pāñcarātra.’¹⁴

Already one can see how the Sāṁkhya-Yoga ideas have been reworked in the Pāñcarātra system. By syncretistically assimilating the principles of the Sāṁkhya-Yoga traditions, the Pāñcarātra system attempts to acquire orthodox status to its ideas and entrenches a unique ritual tradition central to the Vaiṣṇava worship. Especially, the Yoga tradition has become so integral to the Pāñcarātra system that it delineates the five duties of the Vaiṣṇavas as follows—*tapas*, *puṇḍra*, *nāma*, *mantra*, and *yoga*.¹⁵ Thus, the fifth duty of the Vaiṣṇava is to observe yoga as part of his daily practice. Furthermore, the subject matter of the Pāñcarātra texts is divided into four parts, one of which is *yoga* (meditation) and the others being *jñāna*, *kriyā* and *caryā*.¹⁶

The Pāñcarātra system subscribes to the view of one ultimate end (*ekāntikavāda*). This ultimate end is understood as Viṣṇu, who is further described as pure bliss, omniscient and omnipotent. He is said to possess six auspicious qualities—*jñāna*, *aiśvarya*, *vīrya*, *śakti*, *bala* and *tejas*. He is also said to accompany his divine consort. The divine consort of Viṣṇu is also said to possess the very same six auspicious qualities thus making her an equal partner. She is said to be both identical and distinct from him. The *Lakṣmī Tantra* attributes to Śrī Lakṣmī the very same five functions that Viṣṇu is said to carry out—*tirodhāna* (obscuration), *śṛṣṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (maintenance), *saṁhṛti* (dissolution) and *anugraha* (favour).¹⁷

In what follows it becomes clear how the Sāṁkhya-Yoga systems have been reworked with a view to systematise the Vaiṣṇava doctrine. The Pāñcarātra texts generally differentiate between three levels of

¹⁴ Pratap P. Kumar, *The Goddess Lakṣmī*, 22.

¹⁵ Kumar, 22.

¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

creation—pure creation, which includes the four *vyūha*-s (Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha), the *vibhava*-s or the *avatāra*-s, the *arcā* form of Viṣṇu, the *antaryāmin* form of Viṣṇu, the highest heaven (*vaikuṇṭha*), the exalted souls (*nityasūri*-s), and the eternally liberated ones (*nityamukta*-s). According to the Pāñcarātra tradition, at the time of creation, Lakṣmī becomes divided into two aspects—Kriyāśakti and Bhūtīśakti. The pure creation described above emanates from her Kriyāśakti. The Bhūtīśakti gives rise to what is known as Kūṭasthapuruṣa and after that gives rise to Māyāśakti. It is from the Māyāśakti the Avyakta (unmanifest) or the Mūlaprakṛti (root-matter) arises for the purpose of the material creation.¹⁸

In Sāṃkhya, the mutual relationship between Puruṣa and Prakṛti is unclear. However, in the Pāñcarātra tradition, that relationship is regulated by Kāla. In the scheme of the Pāñcarātra system, Kāla emanates from Māyāśakti and it is from Kāla the Sattva, Rajas and Tamas *guṇa*-s arise. The manner in which the Tattva-s emerge from the Mūlaprakṛti is similar to that of the Sāṃkhya system. From the Mūlaprakṛti comes *mahat*, and *buddhi* is an aspect of *mahat*. From *mahat* comes *ahaṃkāra* and from it the five *mahābhūta*-s, five *tanmātra*-s, five *buddhīndriya*-s and five *karmendriya*-s.

After the appearance of the *tattva*-s, the Pāñcarātra system departs from the Sāṃkhya system and speaks about the appearance of the cosmic egg from the navel of Viṣṇu, from which arises the shining lotus. It is in this lotus that Aniruddha creates Brahmā, who in turn creates Prajāpati. The sentient and non-sentient beings emerge from Prajāpati.¹⁹

The most important innovation in the system of the Pāñcarātra is the relationship between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. As indicated earlier, in the Sāṃkhya system the relationship between Puruṣa and Prakṛti is unclear and the two are seen as eternally separate entities, whereas in the Pāñcarātra system, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī are two aspects which are indistinguishable and undifferentiated before the creation. Some texts of the Pāñcarātra tradition attribute the initiative to create to Viṣṇu (*Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā* and *Prakāśa Saṃhitā*), whereas the *Lakṣmī Tantra* attributes it sometimes to Lakṣmī and sometimes to both

¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁹ Ibid., 25.

jointly.²⁰ It thus speaks of both unity and duality between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. It is this principle of unity and duality at the same time that has been further elaborated by Rāmānuja and the later theologians of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Therefore, Rāmānuja, as I indicated above, did not actually begin with the Brahman of Bādarāyaṇa and the *Upaniṣad*-s, but rather his starting point is Viṣṇu of the Pāñcarātra system in which he is depicted both in terms of a single principle and at the same time containing multiplicity. It is this Viṣṇu who is always accompanied by his divine consort that Rāmānuja had to reconcile with the Brahman of the Vedānta Sūtras and the *Upaniṣad*-s.

One of the prolific ways in which the Vaiṣṇava theology vis à vis the Pāñcarātra tradition reinterprets is the notion of *sattva* of the Sāṃkhya system. In Sāṃkhya, *sattva* forms part of the other two categories, *viç.*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The three constitute the fundamental make up of Prakṛti. They are said to be dormant in Prakṛti's state of equilibrium. When they are disturbed, the evolutes of Prakṛti begin to emerge thus giving rise to the material world. These ideas are reworked in the Pāñcarātra system in a way that gives the category of *sattva* a special significance. It makes a subtle distinction between the *sattva* of the triad and pure (*śuddha*) *sattva*, which is described as 'self-luminous' and of spiritual nature. It seems to have more of the Puruṣa qualities than those of the Prakṛti. In Vaiṣṇava theology, *nitya vibhūti*, the transcendental universe of the divine is said to be made up of pure *sattva*. In this regard, Chari comments:

Sattva generally refers to one of the three qualities of cosmic matter, *viç.*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Prakṛti* and all its material products are always characterised by these qualities (*guṇas*) in varying proportions. It is not this *sattva* quality that is referred to by the term *śuddha-sattva* of *nitya-vibhūti*. On the contrary, it refers to a different type of *sattva* which is regarded as absolutely free from the tinge of *rajas* and *tamas*. This would mean that there are two types of *sattva-śuddha* which does not possess even in the slightest degree *rajas* and *tamas* and *śuddha* which is associated with *rajas* and *tamas*.²¹

Thus, *nitya-vibhūti* which is constituted of pure *sattva* belongs to the divine being. The Vaiṣṇava theology makes a distinction between

²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹ S. M. Srinivasa Chari, *Vaiṣṇavism: Its philosophy, theology and religious discipline*, 232.

the physical universe (*līlā-vibhūti*) and transcendental universe (*nitya-vibhūti*). And, Viṣṇu is said to be the lord of both universes (*ubhaya-vibhūti nātha*). Vaiṣṇava theologians go to great lengths to explain why *nitya-vibhūti* also goes through modifications like the material world created out of Prakṛti. They explain that even when it goes through modifications, such modifications, unlike that of Prakṛti, are of different kind. The question is that if modifications occur in the *nitya-vibhūti*, how can it be considered eternal (*nitya*)? According to the thirteenth century theologian, Vedānta Deśika,

[t]he modification to which *śuddha-sattva* is subjected is different in nature from what obtains in the material world. In the latter case, the evolution which is a continuous process from one state to another and constant is due to the variation in the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *taṃas*—and they are not, therefore, of permanent character; whereas in the region of *nitya-vibhūti* the modification takes place from one spiritual substance to the other with the least amount of change and the products of such remain permanent without being subject to further modification or decay in accordance with the *saṃkalpa* of *Īśvara*. As already explained, *Īśvara* wills that the objects made out of *śuddha-sattva* should remain so for a limited time only, whereas if His *icchā* or *saṃkalpa* is that it should be of permanent nature, it will remain so.²²

Not only does the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophy distinguish *śuddha-sattva* from the *sattva* of Prakṛti, it furthermore reworks the Sāṃkhya-Yoga concepts in a way that profiles the *Īśvara* as being the primary regulator of *śuddha-sattva* and its by-products. In so doing it invents an entirely new way of conceiving the category of *sattva*. In this innovative reconception of the scheme, the notion of Puruṣa is radically recast as the more personal *Īśvara*, as Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, as Puruṣottama who is said to dwell in his spiritual realm (*nitya-vibhūti*) made of pure *sattva*. Thus, by placing the pure *sattva* on the side of the Puruṣa and not Prakṛti, and by making the Puruṣa an active participant rather than a passive on-looker as in the case of Sāṃkhya, the Śrīvaiṣṇavism achieved three doctrinal points—first, it makes the external dualism of Sāṃkhya resolved within the unified principle of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa as developed in the Lakṣmī Tantra text; second, it makes Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who is always accompanied by his consort, Śrī-Lakṣmī, as the primary cause of all creative process; third, it transforms the

²² Chari, 242.

dualism of Sāṃkhya-Yoga into a non-dualism in which multiplicity and diversity of all *cetana* and *acetana* beings can exist. All of this reworking and transformation first occurs in the Pāñcarātra texts before the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophers integrated these ideas into their scheme of Vedānta. Thus in understanding the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophers' unique Vedānta system, it would be misleading to think that they have developed it purely based on conventional Vedānta sources such as *Brahma Sūtra*, *Upaniṣad*-s and the *Gītā*. One has to appreciate first the intrinsic connection that these philosopher/theologians had with the Pāñcarātra tradition, and it would be logical to think that the Viśiṣṭādvaita position of Rāmānuja makes better sense when seen from the point of view of the Pāñcarātra tradition, which in effect had already reworked the Sāṃkhya-Yoga notions. This explains why from Yāmuna, Rāmānuja and right up to the thirteenth century theologians such as Vedānta Deśika have all gone to great lengths to defend the Pāñcarātra system as a proper orthodox one that was directly received from Nārāyaṇa himself.

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INTERPRETING ACROSS MYSTICAL BOUNDARIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF SAMĀDHI IN THE
TRIKA-KAULA TRADITION

Jeffrey S. Lidke

Abstract

The following analysis of Abhinavagupta's system of mystical practice (termed the fourfold path or *upāya-catuṣṭayam*) aims to illustrate the ways in which the Western discourse of duality, because of its fundamental acceptance of a mind/body split, is an unsuccessful heuristic model for understanding non-Western mystical traditions. Specifically, I examine the hermeneutical limitations one encounters when applying W. T. Stace's model of comparative mysticism, which gives a Cartesian privilege to the 'introvertive' mystical experience of mental inwardness over its 'extrovertive' counterpart, to Abhinavagupta's eleventh-century Trika-Kaula system. Abhinavagupta's own discourse on mystical states of consciousness inverts Stace's model and ultimately collapses the distinction between introvertive and extrovertive. In the preparatory stages of Trika-Kaula practice, the adept harnesses an inward, regressive power (*visarga-śakti*) in pursuit of an introvertive mystical experience with eyes closed (*nimīlana-samādhi*). In the later stages, however, the same regressive power is inverted to reveal its progressive side and the Tantric thereby attains an extrovertive experience with eyes opened (*unmīlana-samādhi*). At the culmination of his or her practice the Tantric attains a state of consciousness in which the inner and outer become united in the singular continuum of consciousness. At this 'no-path' stage of transcendent experience (*bhairavīmudrā*) the Self within and the world without are one.¹

¹ The following abbreviations are used in the text:

ĪP	Īśvarapratyabhijñā
ĪPv	Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī
PS	Paramārthasāra
PTlv	Partriṃśikālaghuvṛtti
PTV	Parātriṃśikāvivarāṇa
PrHṛ	Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam
ŚSū	Śiva Sūtra
ŚSūv	Śivasūtra-vimarśinī
SpKā	Spanda Kārikā

Introduction

This essay traces its roots to a graduate seminar on Comparative Mysticism taught by Gerald J. Larson at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1994. In this seminar I encountered Larson's extraordinary grasp of the textual sources on yogic practice and philosophy and was inspired by his insight into their deeper significance for our understanding of the relevance of 'mystical' to 'human' experience. In 1973 Larson had carefully formulated his theory of mysticism in an essay titled 'Mystical Man in India': 'A mystical experience,' Larson therein claimed, 'is an intuitive understanding and realization of the meaning of existence—an intuitive understanding and realization which is intense, integrating, self-authenticating, liberating—i.e., providing a sense of release from ordinary self-awareness—and subsequently determinative—i.e., a primary criterion—for interpreting all other experience whether cognitive, conative, or affective.'² In this way Larson lifted mystical experience out of the limited domain of the 'spiritual virtuoso' by identifying it as a 'dimension of general human experience.'³

The most precise yogic term for the mystical dimension of human experience is *samādhi*, which literally means 'placed together' or 'settled down' and refers to higher states of yogic awareness in which the mind becomes one-pointed, either on an object of contemplation, or on Awareness itself.⁴ Within the significant body of Sanskrit literature that defines and codifies the state of *samādhi* there is general disagreement as to whether or not the experience of *samādhi* demonstrates a condition of union or disunion between the individual and the world. In other words, while many spiritual traditions within India have utilized yogic practices for the attainment of their higher aspirations, there is no consensus as to what such experiences have validated.

SpN Spanda Nirṇaya

Tā Tantrāloka

TSā Tantrasāra

VB Vijñānabhairava

² Gerald James Larson, 'Mystical Man in India,' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1973): 3.

³ Larson, 'Mystical Man,' 3–4.

⁴ See Ian Whicher's excellent discussion of the various interpretations of this central term in his *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 27–30.

Classical Sāṃkhya, arguably the oldest tradition of systematic reflection on yogic experience, adopts the dualist position that *samādhi* reveals a fundamental and eternal separation between material reality (*prakṛti*) and consciousness (*puruṣa*). *Samādhi*, if we are to understand the Sāṃkhya position correctly, is not about ‘union’ but ‘dis-union.’ Although a foundational system within the history of yogic thought and practice, Sāṃkhyic claims for a bifurcated universe were not accepted wholesale by all subsequent practitioners of yoga.

In this essay I examine the understanding of yogic *samādhi* as developed in the texts and traditions collectively identified as Kashmir Śaivism. In the numerous works that follow under this broad rubric we find the systematization and hierarchization of a number of disparate ritual and philosophical systems practiced by the various Tantric and yogic traditions that had flourished in the Kashmir region since as early as the 3rd century C.E.⁵ A much studied and historically significant sect among the numerous Śaivisms that developed in Kashmir is the Trika-Kaula (‘Triadic Embodied Cosmos’),⁶ established by the eleventh-century exegete, Abhinavagupta, and maintained by a number of disciples, including Kṣemarāja, in a lineage which some claim extends in to the third millennium.⁷ A central component of Trika-Kaula traditions is the claim that Tantric initiation and practice under the guidance of a teacher capable of transmitting power (*śaktipāta-guru*) enables one to construct the unifying and empowering vision of phenomenal reality as the flashing forth of one’s own I-awareness (*ahaṃ-ābhāsa*).⁸

⁵ The best synopsis of this ‘systematization’ is found in Alexis Sanderson, ‘Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,’ in *The World’s Religions*, ed. S. Sutherland et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), 660–704.

⁶ This name reflects Abhinavagupta’s discursive focus on a number of triads, of which the primary include: (a) the ontological triad of Śiva (the absolute as consciousness), Śakti (the absolute as dynamic power), and Nara (the absolute as the individual); (b) the textual triad of Āgama-Śāstra (revealed texts), Pratyabhijñā-śāstra (philosophical texts), and Spanda-śāstra (theological/liturgical texts); (c) the epistemological triad of *guru-vacana* (word of the teacher), *śabda-pramāṇa* (textual authority), and *anubhava* (direct experience); and (d) the ritual/yoga practice triad of *āṇava-upāya* (the way of the individual), *śākta-upāya* (the way of power), and *sāmbhava-upāya* (the way of Śiva-consciousness).

⁷ Among those making a claim to maintaining this medieval lineage are the followers of the Kashmiri guru, Lakshman Joo, Balajinnatha Pandit, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, and contemporary practitioners of Sarvāmnaya Tantra in the Kathmandu Valley.

⁸ See Alper’s discussion of *ābhāsa* and ‘I-awareness’ in ‘Śiva and the Ubiquity of

This essay incorporates an analysis of the fourfold path (*upāya-catustayam*) that Abhinavagupta defines as the means to final realization (*śivatva*).⁹ According to Abhinavagupta's concise *sādhana* manual, the *Paramārtha-sāra*,¹⁰ this path begins with an initiation involving the descent of power (*śaktipāta-dīkṣā*), the ritual awakening of a 'coiled power' called *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*.¹¹ The awakening and continued manipulation of this energy is the primary focus of the *sādhana* system.¹² The purported result of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening is the fusing of all semantic dichotomies into a unified experience of bliss consciousness (*ānanda*). As a means of expressing this transcendence of opposites, Abhinavagupta speaks of a single emissional power, or *visarga-śakti*, with a dual capacity: one regressive and introvertive, the other progressive and extrovertive.¹³

This introvertive-extrovertive dialectic appears on several levels in Abhinavagupta's discourse on Trika-Kaula *sādhana*. On the mythico-cosmological level the dyadic *śakti* principle reveals itself as the withdrawal (*nimeṣa*) and expansion (*unmeṣa*) of the supreme consciousness, Paramaśiva. The *nimeṣa* stage of consciousness reveals *visarga-śakti* in its introvertive capacity by withdrawing all manifest expressions into itself in a state of serene self-absorption. The *unmeṣa* stage reveals the extrovertive, expansive capacity of *visarga-śakti* to assume the multiple forms of phenomenality while still remaining un-divided (*abheda*).

The following analysis is primarily concerned with the ways in which this cosmological flux plays out at the level of the human body.¹⁴

Consciousness: the Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi,' in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345–407.

⁹ 'Final realization' is Deba Brata Sen Sharma's translation of *Śivatva* in *The Philosophy of Sādhana* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990).

¹⁰ A text that I was first introduced to and translated under the direction of Larson in Fall 1994.

¹¹ PS 96.

¹² This is Lilian Silburn's thesis in *Kuṇḍalinī—Energy of the Depths* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). For the 'voice of the insider' see Swami Kripānanda's discussion in *The Sacred Power* (South Fallsburg: SYDA Press, 1995); also, Swami Muktananda (Ganeshpuri: SYDA Press, 1979).

¹³ For my understanding of the regressive and progressive capacity of *visarga-śakti* I am indebted to Paul Muller-Ortega. See his discussion in 'The Power of the Secret Ritual: Theoretical Formulations From the Tantra,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4 (Summer 1990): 41–59.

¹⁴ My focus on 'embodiment' is particularly inspired and informed by Gavin Flood's fine work, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993).

In line with classical Tantric conceptions of the body as a microcosm, Abhinavagupta claims that the *nimeṣa-unmeṣa* dialectic is not only a cosmic pulse (*spanda*), but also the creative impulse of Paramaśiva within the human heart, manifesting as the process of withdrawal and expansion within human consciousness.¹⁵

Due to the veiling power (*tirodhāna-śakti*) of consciousness, the Absolute-as-human experiences limitation and suffering. However, within this contracted state, the perfectly free (*svātantrya-śakti*) continues the pulsation of expansion and withdrawal. The reason for engaging in the yogic and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) of the *upāyā-catuṣṭayam* is to manipulate this dyadic energy for the yogic purpose of bringing about non-dual states of cognition (*samādhi-s*),¹⁶ which enable the Tantric practitioner to re-cognize his or her essential nature (*svabhāva*) as Paramaśiva.

In articulating this expansion/withdrawal discourse, the Trika-Kaula sources invoke a dyad of *samādhi-s*.¹⁷ One of these is the introvertive or *nimīlana-samādhi*. This *samādhi*, perhaps so named because it describes a state that is reached through ‘closed-eyed’ meditation techniques,¹⁸ is understood to mirror the condition in which the Godhead closes its eyes and gazes upon its own plenitude within itself. A second *samādhi* is titled *unmīlana-samādhi*, the ‘open-eyed’ mystical state in which the yogin recognizes phenomenality as the *unmeṣa* or outward arising of *visarga-śakti*.

The keypoint about these two *samādhi-s* is that they are interwoven throughout the stages of Tantric yogic practice in such a way that the yogin, like the Godhead, comes to recognize that the outer world—seen with ‘eyes open’—and the inner world—seen with ‘eyes closed’—are identified as fundamentally one. This is the stage of

¹⁵ The most important work on Abhinavagupta’s understanding of Paramaśiva as seated in the heart is Paul Muller-Ortega’s *The Triadic Heart of Śiva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹⁶ Derived from *√dhā*, ‘to put,’ with the prefix, *sam-ā*, *samādhi* literally means, ‘a joining.’ In Patañjali’s yoga system, *samādhi* denotes the highest stages of yogic attainment in which the mind-fluctuations have ceased and the Self abides in Itself.

¹⁷ Jaidev Singh provides a helpful discussion of the *samādhi-s* in his *Spanda-Kārikās, The Divine Creative Pulsation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

¹⁸ This, at least is the claim made by some contemporary exponents of Trika-Kaula doctrine and practice. See, for example, Swami Shantananda’s discussion in *The Splendor of Recognition: An Exploration of the Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam, a Text on the Ancient Science of the Soul* (South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation, 2003), pp. 347–354.

highest mystical awareness known as the *bhairava-mudrā* in which consciousness and the world are identified as composed of the same fundamental reality, a reality which is both ‘within’ the yogin as his essential self and manifest as phenomenality. In his *Spandaninīya*, Kṣemarāja writes,

With regards to the *unmīlana* and *nīmīlana-samādhi*-s, [the yogin] having seated in the middle ground that pervades both (external and internal awareness) and thereby attaining the state in which [on the one hand] all thought constructions are incinerated by the [churning of the] two (*unmīlana* and *nīmīlana*) firesticks and [on the other hand experiences] the simultaneous revelation of the circle of the sense organs has entered into the [state of highest realization known as] *bhairavī-mudrā*.¹⁹

What Kṣemarāja is describing here is a state of realization in which the fluctuations of the mind (*cittavṛtti*) are stilled—the classical goal of Patañjali Yoga (YSū 1.2)—and yet the senses are engaged in the perception of the world. In this rare condition, the yogin encounters the union of both *unmīlana* and *nīmīlana samādhi*-s. This condition of ‘inwardness’ coupled with ‘outwardness’ is the focus of *Śiva-sūtra* 3.45: ‘There is again [the state of] *pratimīlana*.’²⁰ In his commentary on this passage, Kṣemarāja explains that *pratimīlana* is a condition in which the yogin witnesses his own self as both the external world and his essential self-nature.²¹ This witnessing of the identity of self and the world places us within the realms of a discourse that consciously collapses and shatters the distinction between consciousness and material reality, inner and outer, ‘self’ and ‘other.’ In this highest stage of yogic *samādhi*, the yogi’s ‘inner’ world and the ‘outer’ world are experienced as a single continuum of consciousness.²² This innate mystical state (*sahaja-samādhi*) is the experience of one’s essential nature (*svabhāva*).²³

¹⁹ SpN on SK 1.11: *Nīmīlanonmīlanasamādhinā yugapadyāpakamadhyadhya-bhūmyavashtaṁ bhāddhyasitaitad-ubhaya-visargaraṇi-vigalitasakalavikalpo 'kramasphāritakaraṇacakra antarlakṣo bahirdṛṣṭir nimesonmesavarjitah | iyaṁ sā bhairavīmudrā sarvatantrēsu gopitā | | ity āmnāta bhagavadbhairavamudrānupraviṣṭo.*

²⁰ *Bhuyah syāt pratimīlanaḥ.*

²¹ ŚSūV on ŚSū 3.45: *Pratimīlanam, caitanyābhimukhyena nīmīlanam, punar api caitanyātmā-svasvarūpa-unmīlanarūpam.*

²² VB: *Mamaiva bhairavasya etāḥ viśvabhaṅgo vibheditāḥ*: ‘From me, who is the Godhead, the waves of the universe are manifested in various forms.’ CF. PS 48–49.

²³ For more discussion of *sahaja-samādhi* as an innate, mystical state see Robert

Interpreting Mysticism Across Boundaries

In the descriptions of this state of re-cognition, (*pratyabhijñā*) we find language about 'oneness' and 'bliss' that resembles descriptions made by mystics from other traditions. Bearing in mind Larson's opening statements about the 'mystical state' as a fundamental dimension of human experience and knowing his interest in the field of comparative mysticism and philosophy, I now seek to interpret 'across boundaries'²⁴ by situating the Trika-Kaula model of yogic practice and experience within the broader framework of comparative mysticism.²⁵ More specifically, I will examine and critique W. T. Stace's model of 'introvertive/extrovertive mysticism' as one lens by which to sharpen our understanding of the Trika-Kaula mystics' experience and understanding of yogic practice and experience. The purpose of this 'hermeneutical gazing' is not to suggest that the case of one equals that of the other. Quite to the contrary, this is an exercise in reflecting on difference. The model of comparative mysticism proposed by Stace does not apply to the case of Trika-Kaula, and it is precisely this 'not-fitting' that I find illuminating, in that it makes more apparent exactly what does 'fit', thereby revealing the degree to which Trika-Kaula categories are distinct from and challenge many western epistemological categories. As we shall see, Stace's analysis of mysticism is rooted in a Cartesian bias which, as Frits Staal has shown,²⁶ is part-and-parcel of the Western discourse on the body-mind complex. Not recognizing his own cultural conditioning, Stace constructed a purportedly 'universal' model of mystical experiences

Forman's discussion in 'Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting,' in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, ed. Robert Forman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 8.

²⁴ This phrase comes from an important work that Larson edited with Eliot Deutsch, *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). See Larson's introduction: 'The Age-Old Distinction Between the Same and the Other,' pp. 3–18.

²⁵ The inspiration for contextualizing Trika-Kaulism within the discourse of comparative mysticism came out of a seminar with Gerald Larson in 1993. Since then, my thoughts have been further developed and inspired by the insights of Barbara Holdrege and by Paul Muller-Ortega, who at the time of the writing of this essay is also writing an essay on the relationship of Trika-Kaula *sādhana* to extrovertive and introvertive mysticisms.

²⁶ Frits Staal, 'Indian Bodies' in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas Kasulis et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993): 59–102.

that gives primacy to mind over matter, to silent introspection over ritual action, in a way that reflects the biases of a Cartesian world view. However, this model does not adequately describe the non-dualist cosmos of Abhinavagupta in which mind/spirit and body/matter are not diametrically opposed but rather interrelated aspects of a single dynamic consciousness.²⁷

At this point, many readers might rightly question why it is that I have elected to draw from the writings of W. T. Stace. His classic work, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, was, after all, written over 40 years ago and has already received significant attention and criticism.²⁸ Moreover, there are more recent works, such as R. C. Forman's *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* (1999) and Alan Wallace's *Taboo of Subjectivity: Towards a New Science of Consciousness* (2000) that are rooted in a model of mystical experience that is decidedly more 'eastern.' I defend my decision on three grounds. First, of all the writings on mysticism and philosophy, Stace's remains among the most systematic and insightful. It is precisely for this reason that Larson himself continued to have his graduate students read Stace's work even into the 1990s. Second, Stace's Cartesian orientations, precisely because they are so translucent, bring into bas-relief a particular 'western hermeneutics' that is still dominant today, even four decades after the Stace's *magnum opus* was completed. It is this bringing-into-clarity that makes the use of Stace's arguments fruitful for the purposes of this essay. Third, the age of a text does not, in principle, limit its value de facto. Just because a work is 'newer' does not mean that it is 'better' or more valuable than an older work. Similarly, if I am looking at eleventh-century texts on the 'eastern' side of the hermeneutical divide, then a text from the 1960s on the 'western' side of the divide can hardly be labeled 'too old.' Having offered this apologetic, I concede that my analysis of Stace in this essay suffers, at

²⁷ In his examination of 'Indian Bodies' Staal is actually only considering one type of 'Indian' body: namely, that constructed by the Vedic literature. Consequently, his notion of a hierarchical relation between mind and body does not perfectly fit the Trika-Kaula case in the sense that a hierarchy still suggests some kind of valuation or distinction which is ultimately absent from Trika-Kaula non-dualist discourse.

²⁸ See, for example, the attention that Stace receives by several authors in the Steven T. Katz's (ed.) now classic *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

least in certain ways, from the proverbial straw man syndrome. If I am therefore accused of utilizing Stace for the purpose of highlighting the distinctness of the Trika-Kaula understanding of 'mystical experience', then I stand guilty as charged and ask my readers' pardon.

In choosing to analyze the *upāya-catustayaṃ* via the lens of contemporary theories in the area of comparative mysticism, I do so with several additional reservations. First, I am acutely aware of the problems inherent in the term 'mysticism.' This word, connoting the 'mysterious' and 'ineffable,' is deeply embedded in Western and Christian categories and is arguably too culture specific to be useful in the analysis of non-Western traditions.²⁹ Second, in this era of post-modern critiques, the very aim of comparative mysticism—namely, to study purported claims to the direct experience of, and union with, the divine—is perceived as a scholarly danger zone riddled with truth claims that ought to be left to theologians.

While I concur that truth claims must be located within their specific sociohistorical contexts, I nevertheless concur with Larson that the survival of the field of religious studies lies in the presupposition of the *sui generis* nature of 'religious' experience.³⁰ If all religious discourse is to be reduced to linguistic, social, political, and/or cultural determinants then such study might arguably best be subsumed by the specific disciplines which specialize in these areas.³¹ For this reason, my interest is in a post-deconstructionist 're-construction' which takes seriously the challenges of such scholars as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu, while also utilizing the theoretical presuppositions of a critical phenomenology that always takes seriously the 'words of the believer.'

The kind of 'middle path' approach that I am here attempting to frame posits that no single theoretical method can possibly explain

²⁹ Cf. Carl Keller discussion in his essay, 'Mystical Literature,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: University of Oxford Press), 75–101.

³⁰ Numerous personal communications between 1992 to the present. One encounter will always remain with me. I had just completed a systematic study of the writing of Michel Foucault and was feeling a bit overwhelmed by the weight of his critique. That day I met with Larson in his office and announced to him that I had once thought that the study of religion had something to do with the pursuit of 'truth,' but that now, after reading Foucault, I had come to wonder if there any such 'truth' ever existed. Larson looked me dead in the eye and said, 'I don't think you should ever give up the pursuit of truth.'

³¹ This argument was forcefully and eloquently during a lecture by Dr. Charles Long at the University of California, Spring 2004.

and interpret the multi-dimensionality³² of human activity and experience.³³ In attempting to interpret Trika-Kaula discourse and practice, I have benefited from the insights of both phenomenology and cultural criticism and have attempted to incorporate aspects of both approaches in this study. On the one hand I provide a phenomenological analysis of Abhinavagupta's theories of consciousness,³⁴ while on the other hand I give a critical analysis of the Western discourse of duality that informs certain theories of comparative mysticism. Specifically, I seek to demonstrate how W. T. Stace's model of introvertive/extrovertive mysticism is inverted by Abhinavagupta's system and is thereby inadequate as a theoretical framework.³⁵ His model is so clearly 'Western' that it constitutes a powerful example of the way in which scholars project³⁶ their own dualistic biases upon their respective fields of study.

Stace's Perspective on Mystical Experience

In his *Mysticism and Philosophy* Stace categorizes all mystical experience into two primary types: introvertive and extrovertive. He writes:

The two main types of experience, the extrovertive and the introvertive, have been distinguished by different writers under various

³² Ninian Smart argued convincingly for a 'multi-dimensional' understanding of religion. See his *The World's Religions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989).

³³ In this regard I am indebted to Barbara Holdrege's theoretical arguments for a 'multi-perspectivalist' approach to the study of ritual power. See her discussion in 'Toward a Phenomenology of Power,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 5–37.

³⁴ My interest in this aspect of Abhinavagupta's teachings developed out of my ethnographic research on contemporary Newar Tantrics in Nepal, as well as contemporary American practitioners of Siddha Yoga, which traces its lineage back through Abhinavagupta. These practitioners' discourse on Tantric *sādhana* is rooted in Abhinavagupta's primary *sādhana* texts: the *Paramārtha-sāra*, *Tantrāloka*, and *Tantra-sāra*. Interviews with these American yogis revealed their deep conviction that the aim of Trika-Kaula practice is an experience which is irreducibly 'religious.' While it would be naive to equate the discourse of contemporary Tantrics with that of Abhinavagupta's, it would be equally unwise to ignore their important textual and practice-based parallels.

³⁵ For another critique of Stace, see Katz's discussion in 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*.

³⁶ I use 'project' intentionally to invoke the Indian philosophical notion of *saṃskāra*-s, those impressions which are projected outward through consciousness onto phenomenality and thereby condition experience. See Larson, 'The *Trimūrti* of *Dharma* in Indian Thought: Paradox or Contradiction,' in *Philosophy East and West* 22, No. 2 (1972): 145–153.

names. The latter has been called the 'inward way' or the 'mysticism of introspection,' which is Rudolf Otto's terminology and corresponds to what Miss Underhill calls 'introversion.' The other may be called 'the outward way' or the way of extrospection. The essential difference between them is that the extrovertive experience looks outward through the senses, while the introvertive looks inward into the mind. Both culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity—what Plotinus called the One—with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity. But the extrovertive mystic, using his physical senses, perceives the multiplicity of external material objects—the sea, the sky, the houses, the trees—mystically transfigured so that the One, or the Unity, shine through them. But the introvertive mystic, on the contrary, seeks by deliberately shutting off the senses, by obliterating from consciousness the entire multiplicity of sensations, images, and thoughts, to plunge into the depths of his own ego. There, in that darkness and silence, he alleges that he perceives the One—and is united with it—not as Unity seen through multiplicity (as in the extrovertive experience), but as the wholly naked One devoid of any plurality whatever.³⁷

The fundamental presupposition underlying Stace's definition of the two types of mystical experience is an 'essential' Cartesian split³⁸ between mind—the locus of the 'inward way'—and the material world—apprehended in a vision of unity by the senses during an 'extrovertive experience.' This split enables Stace to locate consciousness as distinct from matter such that the mystic can obliterate the multiplicity of sensations from consciousness in order to explore the 'darkness and silence' of the 'ego.' After examining case studies exemplifying both types of experience Stace reaches his conclusion that these studies

seem to suggest that the extrovertive experience, although we recognize it as a distinct type, is actually on a lower level than the introvertive type; that is to say, it is an incomplete kind of experience. The extrovertive kind shows a partly realized tendency to unity which the introvertive kind completely realizes. In the introvertive type the multiplicity has been wholly obliterated and therefore must be spaceless and timeless, since space and time are themselves principles of multiplicity. But in the extrovertive experience the multiplicity seems to be, as it were, only half absorbed in the unity.³⁹

³⁷ Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 61–62.

³⁸ For a history of the development of this 'split' see Staal, 'Indian Bodies,' in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 59–103.

³⁹ Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 132.

With this statement Stace reveals the dualistic and evolutionary world view that underlies his model. It is a world in which 'multiplicity' stands diametrically opposed to 'unity' and is characterized by space and time, which are to be 'obliterated.' Unless there is complete obliteration the mystic's attainment is only 'partial' and on a 'lower level.'

Stace's is an evolutionary model in which distinct species of mystical experience can be placed on what I herewith identify the MOH-grid (multiplicity-obliteration-hierarchy-grid) ranging from 'lower,' 'partly realized' (because multiplicity still exists) species to those which are 'higher' and 'completely realized' (because multiplicity has been obliterated). With this hierarchical model firmly in place, Stace was able organize data on mystics in such a way that they could be placed in a hierarchical order along his predetermined grid. Organizing his data in this way he then inevitably concluded that mystics such as Ramakrishna and St. Theresa, as 'extrovertive mystics', are spiritually 'inferior' to mystics such as Śaṅkara and Meister Eckhart who represent the introvertive way.

The Trika-Kaula Perspective on Mystical Experience

Stace apparently never encountered the writings of Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja and other Trika-Kaula mystics in his arm-chair travels.⁴⁰ If he had he would have been confronted with data that would have indeed inverted his theory. Trika-Kaula Śaivism is rooted in a non-dual world view that views such linguistic categories as introvertive and extrovertive as expressions of the dualistic thought patterns (*dvaita-vikalpa*) that are the root cause of ignorance (*avidyā*). These limiting thought patterns located in the mind (*manas*) are projected by 'I-consciousness' onto the screen of reality such that the world appears to be a plurality. The aim of Tantric *sādhana* is to uproot all false concepts that limit the realization that both the 'outer' and the 'inner' are inseparable expressions of a single dynamic consciousness. In this

⁴⁰ To say that Stace never encountered Tantric mysticism is in fact misleading since Ramakrishna, whom Stace discusses, was heavily influenced by Śākta Tantra. However, Stace seems unaware of the fact that while Ramakrishna was considered a master of introvertive mysticism, he himself considered the extrovertive realization of the world as the divine Mother to be a more enlightened state of awareness.

state the *sādhaka* does not withdraw into the darkness of his or her ego. Rather, he or she realizes that the light of consciousness that illumines inward meditations also shines forth as the embodied universe. For this reason, to perceive the unity within the multiplicity of the universe with open eyes (*unmīlana*) is fundamentally the same as perceiving the unity of one's inner self with closed eyes (*nimīlana*). As we shall see, to a certain extent the ability to recognize the unity within the phenomenal world is considered a higher and more difficult achievement since one has to overcome the obstacle of the appearance of duality. In other words, in the Trika-Kaula, system extrovertive mysticism is, in a qualified sense, higher than introvertive mysticism.

By privileging introvertive, contemplative forms of mysticism, Stace also ignores the role of ritual in bringing about shifts in consciousness.⁴¹ In Trika-Kaulism ritual is the means to the final perception of non-duality. In this tradition both esoteric and exoteric ritual practices bring about radical awakening through the bodily appropriation of preceptorial power (*kaulikī-śakti*). The transmission of this power occurs within the context of highly secretive initiations (*dīkṣā*) and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) that are said to awaken the aspirant's dormant spiritual power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) and enable him or her to cultivate this energy for the purpose of the highest mystical state, *bhairavīmudrā*.⁴² The tradition's ability to produce such a transformation resides in a knowledge of the *visarga-śakti* within the body (*deha-vidyā*). From this knowledge the Trika-Kaula yogins developed extensive and systematic body-based technologies that produce a radical extrovertive experience of non-duality in which multiplicity is not obliterated but rather 're-cognized' as the expansion of one's own consciousness such that all phenomena are identified with the Self.

As aids to the construction of this matter-affirming awareness, and in accordance with a discourse that affirms materiality and

⁴¹ For an informed discussion of the relationship of mysticism to ritual practice see Staal, *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁴² As the state in which the yogin realizes his/her identity as the absolute, *bhairavīmudrā* is 'mystical' in the classic Jamesian sense. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Vintage Press, 1990), James writes: '[The] overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness' (410).

embodiment as expressions of divinity, the Trika-Kaula yogins condone, in highly restricted contexts, the use of prohibited substances and antinomian actions as means to transcend culturally defined barriers in the quest for power and mystical awakening. To understand these transgressive acts, one must contextualize them within the system of yogic practices which give them meaning. We shall see that the Trika-Kaula engagement in antinomian, left-handed practices (*vāmācāra*) is the logical outcome of a world-affirming discourse of embodiment—one which privileges neither introversion nor extroversion, neither mind nor matter, neither self nor other, but rather perceives them as inseparable aspects of a singular consciousness that is only fully apprehended in a trans-linguistic state in which all dualities are recognized as the fictions of limited knowledge. In this way I hope to expose the problems inherent in attempting to use any dualistic discourse, like that of Stace's, as an interpretive framework for understanding Trika-Kaula traditions.

The Wondrous Display of Subjects and Objects

In contradistinction to the Western body/mind or body/consciousness split, the Trika-Kaula discourse identifies phenomenal existence as the body of consciousness. To the Trika-Kaulas the material world is not separate from consciousness. Rather, it is the flashing forth of consciousness into a wondrous display of subjects and objects, which, through training in specialized ritual techniques, is ultimately re-cognized as an expression of one all-pervading consciousness.⁴³ In defending this theory of projection (*ābhāsa-vāda*), the Trika Śaivas argue that the Absolute (*cit-śakti*) is both pure luminosity (*prakāśa*) and a

⁴³ *Paramārtha-sāra* 25–26 [author's translation]:

*Ajñānatimirayogād ekam api svasvabhāvam ātmānam /
grāhyagrāhakanānāvāicitryerāvabudhyeta // 25*

'From Its association with the darkness of ignorance, the Self, though its own self-nature is non-dual, comes to perceive itself as a wondrous diversity of subjects and objects.'

*Rasaphāṇita śarkarikāguḍakhaṇḍādyā yathekṣurasa eva /
tadvad avasthābhedaḥ sarve paramātmānaḥ śambhoḥ // 26*

'As syrup, molasses, candied sugar, sugar balls and hard candy, etc. are all juice of the sugar cane, so the plurality of conditions are all of Śambhu, the Supreme Self.'

reflective power (*vimarśa-śakti*) capable of self-projection and limitation (*saṃkocana*).⁴⁴ In other words, the Trika-Kaulas define the Absolute as dynamic consciousness (*cit-śakti*).⁴⁵

In cosmogonic terms, the Absolute, comprising both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, is called *paramaśiva*, *paraśaṃvīt*, *caitanya*, *anuttara*, *mahāśūnya*, and *cit-śakti*. Each of these technical terms refers not only to a cosmological principle but also to a state of consciousness located within the body and accessible through meditative practices. In other words, Abhinavagupta's Tantric discourse employs a double intentionality in which descriptions of the cosmic-consciousness are simultaneously references to the body. For this reason an analysis of Trika-Kaula cosmogonic descriptions provides insight into Tantric models of the body/consciousness dialectic. Briefly then, let us turn to an account of Trika-Kaula cosmogony as told in Āgamic literature.

At the time of creation, from within the cosmic plenum, there emerges an innate pulsation. Desiring to bring forth the universe, this pulsating power (*spanda-śakti*) begins to stir and, like a spider weaving its web, emits the universe out of the infinite womb of Paramaśiva.⁴⁶ This capacity for self-projection is understood as a dialectic of the progressive and regressive power of the *visarga-śakti*. During the phase of cosmic manifestation, the *śakti* displays its progressive/extrovertive capacity, and at the time of dissolution (*mahāpralaya*), the *śakti* displays its regressive/introvertive capacity by reabsorbing the universe of transmigrational experience.⁴⁷ The projection and manifestation of phenomenal existence are at times characterized as a contractive process. According to the Trika-Kaula tradition, the phenomenal world is, in actuality, a contraction (*saṃkocana*) of consciousness. It is a coagulation or condensing of infinite

⁴⁴ Alper offers an extensive analysis of *ābhāsavāda* in his essay, 'Śiva and the Ubiquity of Consciousness: The Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi,' in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345–407. Cf. Kamalakar Mishra's *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* (Massachusetts: Rudra Press, 1993): chapter 5, 'The Theory of Appearance (*Ābhāsavāda*),' pp. 191–218.

⁴⁵ See Jaidev Singh's discussion of 'dynamic consciousness' in his translation and exposition of the *Spanda Kārikās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980): esp. pp. xiii–xxii.

⁴⁶ For a further discussion of the *spanda* dynamic see Deba Brata Sen Sharma's *The Philosophy of Sādhana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990): chapter 1, 'The Metaphysics of the Trika School,' pp. 14–40.

⁴⁷ I am indebted to Paul Muller-Ortega for his insights on the dual nature of the *visarga-śakti*. See his essay, 'The Power of the Secret Ritual Theoretical Formulations From the Tantra,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer, 1990): 41–59.

potentiality into a finite form.⁴⁸ Hence, in this system evolution is an involution involving the return to the unmanifest state of non-dual consciousness.

Although from a certain perspective the process of universal manifestation is a limitation of consciousness, on another level it is the unlimited body of God (*īśvara-śarīra*).⁴⁹ For this reason, the universe is called the embodied cosmos (*kula*).⁵⁰ As the self-manifestation of Śiva, the *kula* is the power of embodiment (*kaulikī-śakti*) which makes possible the play of universal creation (*viśva-sṛṣṭi-līlā*).⁵¹ Significantly, this power of embodiment plays out at the level of the human body, itself a *kula*, and possessed of *kaulikī-*, *vimarśa-*, and *visarga-śakti-s*.⁵² In other words, according to Trika-Kaulism, the process of cosmic embodiment recapitulates itself at the human level.⁵³ Just as the universe contracts only to expand again, so the human experiences limitation only to become omnipotent again by engaging in the esoteric practices of Trika-Kaula *sādhana*, which are designed to harness the regressive power of the *visarga-śakti*. This harnessing of power is not an effort to obliterate matter and isolate consciousness. Rather, it is the means by which matter is re-cognized *as* consciousness.

Contracted Like a Fig Tree

One shared characteristic among Tantric traditions is the claim that the body is a microcosmic replica of the universe.⁵⁴ Kṣemarāja writes:

As the Lord has the universe as a body (*viśvaśarīra*), so the self with contracted consciousness (*citisaṃkocātma*) is the entire form of con-

⁴⁸ Flood, *Body*, 110.

⁴⁹ Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 43. Cf. Flood, 37, 125, 64.

⁵⁰ Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 58–63.

⁵¹ For a discussion of this notion of the universe as a ‘cosmic-play’ (*līla-vāda*), see Kamalakar Mishra’s account in his *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* (Massachusetts: Rudra Press, 1993): 249–251. Cf. SenSharma, *Philosophy*, 29, 42.

⁵² Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 44.

⁵³ The Trika-Kaula tradition is in no way unique in its equating of cosmic embodiment with human embodiment. See Dirk Van Joens’s comparative and synthetic discussion in ‘Transmission and Fundamental Constituents of the Practice,’ in *Hindu Tantrism*, eds. Sanjukta Gupta et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979): 47–70.

⁵⁴ Edward C. Dimock Jr. aptly writes, ‘The essence of Tāntric thought is that man is a microcosm. He contains within himself all the elements of the universe; he is a part that contains all the elements of the whole.’ See his *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 137.

sciousness contracted (*saṃkucita*). The conscious being (*cetana*) is the experient who has the entire universal form (*viśvarūpa*) contracted like a fig-tree in the seed.⁵⁵

In constructing this microcosm-macrocosm discourse, Trika-Kaulas like Kṣemarāja adopted and elaborated upon pre-existing models of subtle physiology in which the various evolutes (*tattva*-s) and deities were given precise bodily correspondences. In this way, in the context of ritual practice, the initiate could locate the various parts of the universe within specific bodily loci such that he or she would eventually make the claim: *sarvam idam aham eva*—‘I alone am all this.’⁵⁶

In the Trika-Kaula system the body (*deha*, *śarīra*) is a multi-leveled and hierarchized entity comprising both a vertical and horizontal axis. The horizontal body is composed of layers of coagulated consciousness beginning with the dense, physical sheath (*sthūla-śarīra*) and moving inward through the subtle (*sūkṣma*), causal (*kāraṇa*), and supreme (*para*) levels of being. These four levels⁵⁷ are said to correspond to four states of consciousness: waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*susupti*), and transcendental (*tuṛīya*).⁵⁸ The fourth or transcendent body resides in the heart (*hṛdaya*). Thus, at the core of the human anatomy, at the literal heart of embodiment, Paramaśiva resides as the transcendent source of manifestation. Placing Paramaśiva in the region of the physical heart supports the Trika-Kaula’s claim that even during the time of self-limitation (*tirodhāna*), consciousness maintains its transcendent nature (*viśvottīṛṇa*).⁵⁹ For this reason, the

⁵⁵ Kṣemarāja on *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam* 4. Translated by Mark S. G. Dyczkowski in *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmiri Shaivism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987): *yathā ca evam bhagavān viśvaśarīra, tathā citisamkocātmā saṃkucita-cidrūpā cetano grāhako ‘pi valadhānikāvat saṃkucitāśesaśarīrūpaḥ*. For further discussion of the *viśvarūpa*/fig tree motif see my *Viśvarūpa Mandir: A Study of Caṅgu Nārāyaṇ, Nepal’s Most Ancient Temple* (New Delhi: Nirala Publications, 1996).

⁵⁶ See Sanderson’s discussion of this statement of ‘transcendental subjectivity’ in ‘Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir,’ 180.

⁵⁷ In the Śrī Vidyā system there are only three layers—gross, subtle, and atomic—which correspond to the forms of the goddess, Lalitā Tripurasundarī. For an insightful comparison with another Kaula tradition, see Douglas Brooks’ discussion of subtle physiology in *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrī Vidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

⁵⁸ For more on the ‘horizontal’ body see Flood, 176–184.

⁵⁹ See Larson’s discussion of the manifest-transcendent dialectic in his essay, ‘The Sources for Śakti in Abhinavagupta’s Kāśmīr Śaivism: A Linguistic and Aesthetic category,’ in *Philosophy East and West* 24 (January 1974): 41–56.

Pratyabhijñā texts declare that existential awakening can occur in an instant (*pratibhā*). All that is necessary is the re-cognition of one's essential Self dwelling in the heart.

However, in Abhinavagupta's *Paramārtha-sāra* we read that a second general category of awakening is one that leads not to instant recognition, but rather only partial recognition, a recognition that becomes complete only after a gradual ascension through the phases of Tantric yoga.⁶⁰ Here Abhinavagupta is referring to the internal ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* within the body's central energy channel (*suṣumnā-nāḍī*). This central channel resides within the subtle body. As the body's vertical axis,⁶¹ this channel is envisioned as ascending from the base of the spine to the crown of the head, and, in the Trika-Kaula system of subtle physiology, even beyond to the *dvādaśānta-cakra* twelve inches above the crown.⁶² Along this central column are five energy wheels (*cakra*-s), which are depicted as lotus flowers. These centers are recognized as seats of power (*śakti-pīṭha*) that correspond to the *tattva*-s. Hence, the cosmogonic process is replicated within the body through the *cakra* system.

Just as the Godhead moves from a state inward absorption (*unmeṣa*) to outward expression (*nimeṣa*) so the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is understood to move from a condition of dormancy or 'sleep' to one of being manifest or awake. While *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is dormant, and coiled like a snake, the individual experiences limitation. When fully awakened by a qualified teacher (*sat-guru*), the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* ascends through the *suṣumnā*, burning up the *sādhaka*'s karmic seeds (*saṃskāra*-s) and moving back through the levels of the cosmos to its transcendent source. Hence, Tantric *sāadhanā* is understood as an internal re-absorption of the universe.⁶³ 'Yoga,' declares Jayaratha, 'is the act of fusing [all] the metaphysical principles together within consciousness.'⁶⁴

⁶⁰ PS 96–99.

⁶¹ For further analysis of the Trika conception of the 'vertical axis,' see: Flood, *Body*, 186–187; cf., Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 139–162.

⁶² In a key passage from the *Tantrāloka* (23.33–39), Abhinavagupta describes the *dvādaśānta* as the 'terminal point' of the subtle breath. [Translated by Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, 168.] Similarly, the Vajrayāna speaks of a supreme center called 'Vajra' above the crown of the head.

⁶³ In technical literature this process of re-absorption is termed *laya-sādhana*. See Sanjukta Gupta's analysis in 'Modes of Worship and Meditation,' in *Hindu Tantrism*, 163.

⁶⁴ *Tantrāloka-vivaraṇa I*, 190.

Through this discussion of the role and internal constitution of the body in the Trika-Kaula discourse one theme becomes clear: for the Trika-Kaula yogin there is a fundamental non-difference between the inner world of the yogin and his or her external cosmos. Bearing this in mind, we now turn to an exploration of the mechanisms of Trika-Kaula *sādhana* through which the initiate cultivates his or her own power centers to produce an innate, non-dual state (*sahaja-samādhi*) in which all dualistic notions are dissolved.

The Awakening of Power

The Trika-Kaula Śaivas were apparently obsessed with harnessing power. Viewing their own bodies as repositories of infinite *śakti*-s, they developed ritual techniques to awaken and manipulate these powers. Arising out of the cremation ground cults of the Kāpālika-Kaulas,⁶⁵ the Trika incorporated within its fold many *vāmācāra* practices that were seen as necessary aids to the transcendence of dualistic consciousness (*dvaita-vikalpa*).⁶⁶ Although by the time of Abhinavagupta many of these transgressive elements had been internalized (such as blood sacrifice and meditating on corpses),⁶⁷ there was still strict adherence to the use of the three prohibited substances (*makāra-trayam*)—meat (*māṃsa*), wine (*madya*), and illicit coupling (*maithuna*). These ritual aids functioned in two capacities: first, as stimulants to the awakening of the arising force (*udyama-śakti*) that propelled the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* towards the *sahasrāra*; and second, as a final test of the *sādhaka*'s aptitude (*adhikārin*).⁶⁸

In fact, these left-handed elements were reserved for only the most highly qualified aspirant, the *divya-sādhaka*,⁶⁹ who had attained complete mastery over the senses, and even then they were administered only in the context of the secret injunction (*rahasya-vidhi*). Within the

⁶⁵ Sanderson provides a careful textual retracing of Trika's roots to cremation grounds in his 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions' in *The World's Religions*, 661–701.

⁶⁶ Lorenzen provides an excellent analysis of the use of antinomian practices in Kāpālika practice in *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972): 88–89.

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⁶⁸ Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,' 692–697.

⁶⁹ Mishra, *Kashmir Śaivism*, 377–379. Cf. Hoens, *Hindu Tantrism*, 72.

parameters of this highly controlled ritual atmosphere, these substances were the means to a liberating empowerment in which the *sādhaka* re-cognized his own body as consubstantial with the body of consciousness. In this state of heightened sense engagement he would, through *śaktipāta* be freed from the bonds of *saṃsāra* and attain the state of embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukta*) in which the world is re-cognized as the play of consciousness (*cit-śakti-vilāsa*).⁷⁰

To understand this process of body- and world-affirming spiritual emancipation, we must locate the *rahasya-vidhi* within the context of the fourfold means to freedom, the *upāya-catuṣṭayam*. This system, laid out in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* and alluded to in the *Paramārthasāra*, is a gradual path to liberation (*krama-mukti*), that elevates the aspirant from the condition of a fettered beast (*paśu*) to that of a perfected being (*siddha*).⁷¹ At the core of this system are elaborate

⁷⁰ A fascinating account of this final recognition is provided by the contemporary Trika-Kaula adept, Swami Muktananda, in his autobiography, *Chitshakti Vilas: Play of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

⁷¹ In asserting that there is a hierarchy among the *upāya*-s my analysis challenges the position that the *upāya*-s do not reflect a sequence, but rather a diversity of independent spiritual disciplines. In this regard, one of the finest analyses I am aware of is a recent Master's Thesis by Christopher D. Wallis at the University of California, Berkeley. This work, directed by Robert Goldman, Sally Southerland-Goldman, and Paul Muller-Ortega and titled, 'The Means to Liberation: A Translation and Analysis of Chapters 1–5 of the *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta' astutely demonstrates that the *Tantrasāra* itself is clearly devoid of any notion of a gradual path model with regards to the *upāya*-s. Instead, the *upāya*-s are therein described as each being complete paths in and of themselves, equally capable of bringing a yogin to the highest stages of awareness. This position is also strongly supported by Sthaneshwar Timalsina (personal communication, 6/15/04). However, my own stance is that the *upāya*-s, like the *tattva*-s, can be understood as simultaneously arisen/co-equal, or as part of a sequence (*krama*). In this regard I cite Jaidev Singh's discussion in his translation of the *Śiva-sūtra*: 'Ānava and Śākta upāyas are only *pāramparika*, i.e., leading to realization through successive stages ānava upāya leading to śākta leading to Śāmbhava upāya. The ultimate goal is Śāmbhava Samāveśa—a spontaneous flash of Understanding. Ānava and Śākta upāya-s are only intermediate means to Śāmbhava Yoga' (*Śiva Sūtras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity* [New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979], p. xxiii). While some, like Timalsina, would argue that Singh's ideas come only through the oral teachings he received from his guru, Lakshman Joo, Singh himself cites ŚSū 3.21 and other passages as evidence for this 'sequence theory.' In line with this argument, Gavin Flood cites Jararatha's commentary on the *Tantrāloka* 13.157 in positing that the term *upāya-yoga-kramatā* reveals that Trika-Kaualas understood that, at least in certain contexts, there is a succession of yogic practice that leads successively from *ānava*, to *śākta*, to *śāmbhava*, and finally to *anupāya*. See Flood, *Body*, p. 246, fn. 38. In this same section, Flood notes that while Abhinavagupta, in the PTV, again ranks the *upāya*-s, he also notes that any 'hierarchy contains the delusion of duality.'

yogic and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) designed to harness and cultivate the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*. Training in these techniques begins with *dikṣā* from the Trika guru, during which the *sādhaka* receives not only guidance in the practices of *sādhana*, but also the fundamental empowerment that awakens the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* and thereby initiates a process of internal ascension. The following analysis of these practices will illustrate the extent to which the Trika-Kaulas equated matter with consciousness and thereby collapsed, inverted, and ultimately obliterated the kind of categories that characterize a Cartesian worldview.

The aim of Trika-Kaula initiation is suffusion by the deity (*devatā-āveśa*).⁷² Toward this end, the master constructs an elaborate *triśūlābhja-maṇḍala*, depicting the trident of Śiva adorned by the three goddesses (*devī*-s) of the Trika tradition—Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā—equated respectively with Śiva's three powers of impulse or will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). In addition to this trinity of *devīs*, numerous *yoginī*-s and *kālī*-s pervade the *maṇḍala* as protectors and guides of the esoteric Trika-Kaula path. After constructing the sacred *maṇḍala*, the Tantric guru blindfolds the neophyte. With his or her back to the *maṇḍala*, the yogin receives a flower in his or her hand, which he or she then throws over his or her shoulder and onto the *maṇḍala*. The flight of this flower is held to be predetermined by unseen karmic forces. The deity onto which it lands is to be the initiate's chosen god (*iṣṭa-devatā*). During the subsequent period of the aspirant's ritual training this deity is continually invoked. Eventually, its energized presence will dissolve into that ecstatic vision that is the aim of Trika-Kaula practice: the realization of the unity of *mantra*, Self, guru, and chosen deity.⁷³

During the initiation, the *sādhaka* receives guidance in liturgical practices (*prakriyā*). These practices subsequently inform his daily worship (*nitya-pūjā*). Coupled with these liturgical practices, is the engagement in a hierarchy of Tantric yogic practices that suit the aptitude of the aspirant. These practices are laid out in the *uṣāya-catustayam*, which, as discussed earlier, consists in hierarchical order of the way

⁷² Sanderson, 'Maṇḍala,' 169–170.

⁷³ In addition to the excellent accounts of Trika initiation found in Sanderson (1986), 170–190, and Flood (1993), 220–228, I also witnessed a similar ritual performed by a Sarvāmnāya Tāntrika in the Kathmandu Valley in the spring of 1997.

of the individual (*āṇava-upāya*), the way of power (*śākta-upāya*), the way of Śiva-consciousness (*śāmbhava-upāya*), and the non-way (*an-upāya*).⁷⁴ In most cases, after receiving initiation, the aspirant commences at the first level of the *upāya* system and ascends gradually and sequentially through the various paths until eventually reaching the fourth level.⁷⁵ However, under rare circumstances, the empowerment received during *dīkṣā* is so intense (*ati-tīvra-śaktipāta-dīkṣā*) that the *sādhaka* instantaneously becomes liberated.⁷⁶ According to the *Paramārtha-sāra*, under such circumstances the *sādhaka* immediately enters the fourth and final path, the non-way, which is the condition of *jīvan-mukta*. At this level, the potency of the *sādhaka*'s *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is claimed to be fully awakened. There is no further need for yogic and liturgical practices.

Inverting Stage

Returning to the broader issues of comparative mysticism, what is interesting about this system of practices is that it illustrates an integration of introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences with a final aim of transcending the dualistic concepts inherent in the very notions introvertive and extrovertive. To understand this process, we must return to our discussion of the parallels between the universe and the human yogin. Just as the Absolute, through its emissional power (*visarga-śakti*) projects and then reabsorbs the universe, so likewise the yogin projects his own reality. This dialectical process is termed the arising and withdrawing power (*unmeṣa-nimeṣa-śakti*). Through the *unmeṣa-śakti*, equated in mythico-cosmogonic terms with the awakening of Śiva from cosmic slumber, the universe comes into being. Through the withdrawing power (*nimeṣa-śakti*), the universe is reabsorbed and the divine being retreats into a state of cosmic withdrawal.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Several scholars have provided complete descriptions of the *upāya* system and I here refer the interested reader to their works: Sen Sharma, *The Philosophy of Sādhana*, 105–156; Flood, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*, 245–256; Mishra, *Kashmir Śaivism*, 329–354; and Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 163–218.

⁷⁵ This path of 'gradual ascension' (*krama-mukta*) is Abhinavagupta's referent in śloka 97 of the *Paramārtha-sāra*.

⁷⁶ Ps 96: *Paramārthamārgam enaṃ jhaḡ iti yadā gurumukhāt samabhyeti/ atitīvraśaktipātāt tadaiva nirvighnam eva śivaṃ // 96*

⁷⁷ According to Jaidev Singh, the *spanda-sāstra* is primarily focused on explicat-

In the context of yogic practices, this dialectical process, as we saw above, gives rise to two distinct conditions for mystical experience. During the phase of projection or waking state consciousness the yogin seeks an extrovertive mystical experience, *unmīlana-samādhi*, while during the phase of interior withdrawal his aim is an introvertive mystical state, *nīmīlana-samādhi*.⁷⁸ While Stace, as discussed above, argues that introvertive mysticism is superior to its extrovertive counterpart, in the context of Trika-Kaulism we find that the opposite is true.⁷⁹ At the beginning stages of *sādhana*, the yogin engages in the introvertive practices of six-limbed yoga (*ṣaḍ-aṅga-yoga*) to still the mind and attain the inward stability that is essential for successful engagement in the extrovertive, left-handed Tantric practices at the higher echelons of yogic training.⁸⁰

The final stages of the *śāmbhava* path are, from a qualified perspective, entirely extrovertive. At the *śāmbhava* stage, the *sādhaka* partakes of the prohibited substances for the purpose of cognizing the world as the play of divine consciousness.⁸¹ Interestingly, this immersion in the external world parallels transformation in the inner world. The attainment of extrovertive *samādhi* propels the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* upwards so that the external sexual union with a Tantric consort

ing the *unmeṣa-niṣeṣa* dialectic as it plays out on both cosmic and human levels. See his translation and exposition of the *Spanda Kārikās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), esp. pp. 143–147.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8–9. Cf. Flood, 240.

⁷⁹ Here again, I am not unaware of possible objections to my argument that the *āṇava* practices are ‘introvertive’ while the *śāmbhava* practices are ‘extrovertive’. I make this argument all the while knowing that in his *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta explicitly states that the practices of the *āṇava* path focus on meditation on ‘external’ objects. However, such practices are specifically geared towards the attainment of *nīmīlana-samādhi*. In other words, one focuses on external objects as supports for internal meditation. In this way, the yogin engaged in *āṇava-upāya* seeks to an internalized experience of consciousness by closing off the gates to the senses and drawing the mind within. Conversely, the yogin engaged in the *śāmbhava* practices does so with the senses oriented towards the objects of the world. His eyes are open in pursuit of the *bhairavī-mudrā*, that ‘seal of Bhairavī’ in which the world is experienced as the outward manifestation of one’s own essential nature. To experience this realization, one’s eyes are naturally ‘open’ and therefore the spiritual discipline is correctly identified, according to Stace’s model, ‘extrovertive.’

⁸⁰ The dynamics of the individual stages are elaborately described elsewhere, notably by Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 163–218.

⁸¹ In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta explicitly equates use of prohibited substances with ‘aptitude’ (*adhikārin*) acquired in the *śāmbhava-upāya*. See Navjivan Rastogi’s *Introduction to the Tantrāloka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987): 10, 182.

(*dūti*) parallels an internal union of Śiva and Śakti within the aspirant's subtle body.⁸² At the moment of this parallel union, the dual states of mystical experience—introvertive (*nimīlana*) and extrovertive (*unmīlana*) *samādhi*—fuse into a non-dual awareness (*advaita-vikalpa*) that gives rise to the yogic state that incorporates and transcends them both (*bhairavī-mudrā*, *pratimīlana-samādhi*).

In the final analysis, Trika-Kaula abolishes all dualistic categories. At the level of *an-upāya*, the liberated being (*jīvan-mukta*) experiences the universe and his own self as a singular pulsation of consciousness (PS 47–48). In this state of non-dual cognition, 'inner' and 'outer' become meaningless. And in this state of non-dual perception, the yogin declares: 'I make the universe within myself in the sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator.'⁸³

*Constructing a Double Identity:
Pure in Public, Powerful in Private*

As we have seen, Trika-Kaula yogins claimed to harness the very power of the cosmos, the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, which, through *dikṣā*, could be awakened and thereby give rise to a yogic state in which the individual experiences identity with the greater cosmos, expressed in the *mantra*, Śivo 'ham, 'I am Śiva.' These radical spiritual claims were linked to social units that intentionally challenged and inverted normative injunctions against the inclusion of women and lower caste practitioners. Turning away from a focus on ritual purity, Tantric traditions placed priority on spiritual aptitude (*vidyādhikārin*) as the criterion for admission into the Tantric 'family' (*kula*). Such actions led to Tāntrikas being labeled as 'impure' and 'dangerous'. Consequently, Trika-Kaula practitioners like Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja, who were brahmins, had to maintain a double identity as 'pure' in public, 'Tantric' in private.⁸⁴ For this end, they engaged in two forms of liturgical practices: *tantra-prakriyā* and *kula-prakriyā*. To understand

⁸² This parallel process is most poetically and elaborately detailed by Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, esp. chapter 4, 'Kulamārga, the Esoteric Way,' 157–175.

⁸³ *Tantrāloka*, 3/125, Translated by Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, p. 189.

⁸⁴ Sanderson details the tensions of this dual role in 'Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir,' in *The Category of the Person: Anthropological and Philosophical Perspectives*, eds. Steven Lukes et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

the relationship between these two types of practices we have to contextualize them within the more general categories of 'left-handed' (*vāmācāra*) vs. 'right-handed' (*dakṣiṇācāra*) practice as well as the notion of *adhikārin* attained through practice in the yogas of the *upāya* system. Through this discussion we will once again see the ways in which the Tantric affirmation of embodiment and non-dualism provides a counterpoint to the Western discourse of duality.

The two *prakriyā*-s derive from distinct guru lineages (*santāna*): the *tantra-prakriyā* stems from the Tryambaka lineage, and the *kula-prakriyā* from the Ardhatryambaka lineage.⁸⁵ The primary distinction between these two types of practices is that the more right-handed *tantra-prakriyā* does not incorporate sexual union, or *maithuna*, while the left-handed *kula-prakriyā* makes concrete use of this prohibited act as the *sine qua non* of mystical attainment. Because of its incorporation of *maithuna*, the *kula-prakriyā* had to be enacted in secrecy, and for this reason in the 29th *āhnika* of the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta refers to the *kula-prakriyā* as the 'secret sacrifice.'

These two liturgical traditions are related to each other in much the same way as the introvertive and extrovertive *samādhi*-s. The *tantra-prakriyā* is designed primarily for the purpose of interior worship and for those at the preparatory level of the *āṇava-upāya*. During the liturgy, the *sādhaka* incorporates yogic practices with forms of *pūjā* for the sake of attaining introvertive or *nimīlana-samādhi*.⁸⁶ After attaining competence at this level, he is then initiated into the practices of the *kula-prakriyā* in which he seeks an extrovertive or *unmīlana-samādhi*. As with the *upāya-catuṣṭayam*, the ultimate goal of the liturgical practice is the *pratimīlana-samādhi*, the state of non-dual mystical awareness which obliterates all notions of interior and exterior. To better understand this process we need to examine more fully the two *prakriyā* systems.

The *tantra-prakriyā* begins with the drawing of the Trika *maṇḍala*. Then the *sādhaka* symbolically offers meat and wine to the deities believed to be present in the diagram. After this, he engages in internal worship (*antar-yāga*). During this process, the Tantric visualizes

⁸⁵ For further discussion of these lineages, see Flood, 269–271. Cf. Sanderson (1988).

⁸⁶ The following description is largely taken from Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Tradition.' Cf. Sanjukta Gupta's comparative analysis of liturgical practice in 'Modes of Worship and Meditation,' in *Hindu Tantrism*, 121–163.

the incineration and reconstitution of his self as a divine body (*divya-deha*).⁸⁷ First, he engages in bodily purification (*bhūta-śuddhi*). Through this process he envisions his body burning up in a cosmic fire that obliterates his limited, social self. Alexis Sanderson concisely explicates this esoteric process:

The process of incineration is to be understood by the worshipper as the destruction of his public or physical individuality (*dehāntatā*) and the blowing away of the ashes as the eradication of the deep latent traces (*saṃskāra*) of this binding identification. He is to see that all that remains of his identity is pure, undifferentiated consciousness as the impersonal ground of his cognition and action.⁸⁸

This process of bodily incineration parallels the process of universal destruction during the *mahāpralaya*, in which the universe resembles a vast cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) ‘strewn with the lifeless “corpses” of phenomena.’⁸⁹ This place of cosmic incineration, of universal death, is at once the locus of a liberating power. Through death, the yogin attains divine life. Abhinavagupta writes:

Who does not become perfect by entering in that which is the support of all the gods, in the cremation ground whose form is empty, the abode of the *siddhas* and *yoginīs*, in the greatly terrifying place of their play where all bodies (*vigraha*) are consumed? [That place is] filled with the circle of one’s own rays (*svaśmimaṇḍala*), where dense darkness (*dhvāntasantata*) is destroyed, the solitary abode of bliss, liberated from all discursive thought (*vikalpa*), and filled with innumerable pyres (*citi*); in the cremation ground terrifying to consciousness (*citi*).⁹⁰

This vivid description illustrates once again the direct correspondence between the human body and the body of the universe. Just as one’s own rays illumine meditation, so ultimately it is only one’s own Self which lights up the universe. In the Trika-Kaula *sādhana* complex internal processes mirror the external (PS 48–49). Similarly, descriptions of cosmic processes simultaneously explicate internal dynamics, and for this reason the yogin’s concept of self must eventually expand to incorporate the notion that he or she *is* the universe. First, however, he or she must attain mastery in the training of introvertive techniques. Hence, he progresses to the next stage of the liturgy.

⁸⁷ PS 76 is a reference to this practice of internal incineration.

⁸⁸ *Tantrāloka*, 15.133c–134b.

⁸⁹ Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 143. Cf. PS 79–80.

⁹⁰ *Tantrāloka* 29.183–185b.

Having incinerated his limited self, the *sādhaka* now constructs a divine body through *nyāsa*, the ritual installation of *mantra*-s and deities. During this process he visualizes his own body as the body of consciousness. For this end, the *sādhaka* visually encodes the Trika *maṇḍala* (the *triśulābhja*) onto his own subtle physiology. Starting from the base of the spine he visualizes Śiva's three-pronged trident running up his *suṣumnā* through the aperture in the crown and beyond to the highest *cakra*, the *dvādaśānta* twelve inches above the crown of the head. Along the trident, in correspondence with the *cakra*-s, are inscribed the thirty-six *tattva*-s of cosmic manifestation, beginning with those of the physical world (*mahā-bhūta*-s) and ascending upward to those more refined principles at the initial stages of cosmic manifestation. On the tops of the trident sit the Trika trinity: Para, Parāpara, and Aparā. They are equated with the transcendent aspect (*unmanā*) of the Absolute, the supreme principle (*para-tattva*, the thirty-seventh *tattva*).

During these processes of self-purification and bodily deification, the yogin simultaneously engages in yogic breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*) for the awakening and elevation of *kuṇḍalinī*.⁹¹ Through the utilization of such introvertive yogic techniques as yogic-locks (*bandha*-s) and postures (*āsana*-s), the breath enters and ascends the central channel. This arising breath (*udāna-prāṇa*) thereby propels the *kuṇḍalinī* upwards towards the higher *cakra*-s. The purpose of these techniques is to catalyze internal incineration. Hence the cosmic fire is understood to be the awakened *kuṇḍalinī* which burns up the limited selfhood of the aspirant. It is interesting that the aspirant visualizes this process daily, when the entire process of *sādhana* is itself understood as the ascension of the *kuṇḍalinī*. In other words, the yogin visualizes daily the process of his gradual emancipation (*krama-mukti*). The fact that it is merely visualized does not diminish the validity of the *kuṇḍalinī* as an ontological power. Rather, the daily practice is believed to fuel the arising of the energy.⁹²

After constructing the internal *maṇḍala*, the aspirant engages in an external worship (*bāhya-yāga*) that includes the consumption of wine and meat, but not sexual union.⁹³ In this process we see a very

⁹¹ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 49–50.

⁹² Flood, *Body*, 280–281.

⁹³ The inclusion of these left-handed elements within the *tantra-prakriyā* indicates

important dynamic that again parallels the introvertive-extrovertive, *nimeṣa-unmeṣa* dialectic inherent in the emissional power: namely, that there is a process of interiorization through *antar-yāga*, followed by exteriorization through *bāhya-yāga*. Comparing this internal-external dialectic to the introvertive-extrovertive *samādhi*-s of the *upāya* system, the parallels become readily apparent. In other words, at the level of the interiorization of consciousness *nimeṣa* = *regressive visarga-śakti* = *nimīlana samādhi* = *antar-yāga* = *introvertive mystical experience*, while at the level of the exteriorization of consciousness *unmeṣa* = *progressive visarga-śakti* = *unmīlana samādhi* = *bāhya-yāga* = *extrovertive mystical experience*. Through this elaborate and extensive set of practice-based homologies the Trika-Kaula Tantric re-cognizes the introvertive-extrovertive flux of liturgical and yogic practice as the pulsation of *visarga-śakti* itself. For this reason, the sequence of ritual practice (*pūjā-krama*) is equated with the unfolding of consciousness (*saṁvit-krama*).⁹⁴

Through the liturgical visualizing of the Trika *maṇḍala*, the initiate ultimately seeks to perceive the polarities embodied in notions of internal-external, expansion-contraction, not as Cartesian opposites, but as but two aspects of one reality. Gavin Flood writes:

In visualizing this *maṇḍala* the adept both internalizes the cosmos and its source, defined by the Trika, and in so doing hopes to erode and finally eradicate any sense of individuality or separateness from supreme consciousness. Because the mind is thought to take on the qualities of its objects, the adept through visualizing the *maṇḍala* which is the totality of manifestation and its source, will thereby realize that the essential and manifest cosmic bodies are contained within his own body, and that there is no distinction between him and the object of his meditation.⁹⁵

The fact that external worship follows internal worship, just as extrovertive *samādhi* follows introvertive *samādhi*, points to the Tantric affirmation of the world as the outpouring of *śakti*. Hence, the transgressive consumption of meat and wine asserts both the Tantric's acquisition of a caste-defying power and the embracing of all worldly

that one cannot make an absolute correspondence between *vāmācāra/tantra-prakriyā* and *dakṣiṇācāra/kula-prakriyā*. Still these comparisons are useful, especially given that while the *tantra-prakriyā* rites were considered socially permissible for a brahmin, those of the *kula-prakriyā* were explicitly forbidden.

⁹⁴ Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,' 692–693.

⁹⁵ Flood, *Body*, 280–281.

phenomena as the locus of transformative power, *śakti*. The ingestion of prohibited substances is a radical assertion that while the limited self is bound to Vedic distinctions between pure and impure, the awakened *sādhaka* experiences the entire universe as a manifestation of liberating power.⁹⁶ Thus, that which brings about the downfall of others is that which brings an empowering freedom to the *sādhaka*.

The final empowerment, that which elevates the yogin to the status of *jīvan-mukti*, occurs at the stage of *sāmbhava-upāya*, when one becomes qualified to engage in the secret rite of the *kula-prakriyā*. Through this ritual, which enjoins the most transgressive of the *makāra-trayam*, namely, *maithuna*, the competent Tantric becomes gradually perfected (*siddhi-krama*) within the course of a month.⁹⁷ At this stage, his or her *kuṇḍalinī* strongly activated, the adept transcends all ritual injunctions (PS 40) and lives according to his or her own will (PS 81). Having entered the *an-upāya*, the Tantric claims to be Śiva himself, at once transcendent and immanent, unmanifest and manifest, expanded and contracted, containing all opposites within the body as the pure manifestation of consciousness itself. Hence, acts of secrecy provide the final empowerment.

A Union Beyond, Within, and Through the Body

In the Trika tradition ritualized union embodies on the micro level the ultimate oneness of Śiva and Śakti.⁹⁸ Through mystico-erotic practice, the yogin transcends all opposites to reach a non-dual state of bliss, which arises as a result of the union of *kuṇḍalinī* and Śiva within the *suṣumnā-nāḍī*.⁹⁹ In other words, through the identification

⁹⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the trans-social self see Sanderson, 'Purity and Power Among the Brahmins of Kashmir.' Cf. Muller-Ortega, 'The Power of the Secret Ritual.'

⁹⁷ *Tantrāloka* 29.158–160; cited in Flood, *Body*, 283.

⁹⁸ For an excellent comparative study of Tantric conceptions of sexual union see Eliade's, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958): pp. 249–259. Cf. Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Samuel Wieser, 1975): chapter 9, 'Polarity Symbolism in Tantric Doctrine and Practice,' 199–227.

⁹⁹ PS 75 is an important reference to the *kula-yāga* union of the Śiva-Śakti dyad.

of the microcosm with the macrocosm in ritualized yogic love-making, the *sādhaka* achieves final empowerment through the completion of *kuṇḍalinī*'s internal ascent.¹⁰⁰

The *kula-prakriyā* is designed specifically for this purpose. Abhinavagupta devotes the twenty-ninth chapter of his *Tantrāloka* to an explanation of this final ritual within the *prakriyā* system. The names he gives it are triadic: it is at once the bodily sacrifice (*kula-yāga*), the secret injunction (*rahasya-vidhi*) and the secret sacrifice (*rahasya-yāga*). Masson¹⁰¹ writes:

The ritual [rahasyavidhi] is in fact an elaborate play that takes the greater part of the day. The goal is the same as in any ordinary drama, to reach a state of perfect equanimity, blissful repose, where the *dūtī* identifies herself with Śakti, and the male identifies himself with Śiva.¹⁰²

What distinguishes this act from 'any ordinary drama' is that during the course of its enactment, the 'actors' attain a state of permanent non-dual mystical awareness (*nirvikalpa*-, or *pratimāna-samādhi*).¹⁰³ The key to the ritual is the transmutation of desire into an upward force (*udyama-śakti*) equated with the *spanda* principle itself.¹⁰⁴ For this end, *maithuna* is seen as the necessary vehicle of transformation.

During the ritual, several qualified adepts sit in a circle of worship (*cakra-pūjā*) around the Trika-Kaula master.¹⁰⁵ Each is attended by a female consort, called *dūtī* or *yoginī*. In the initial stages of the rite, the *sādhaka*-s first enter a state of *nimāna-samādhi*.¹⁰⁶ Bringing their senses (*indriyāṇi*) under control by fastening them with the rope of yoga, they prepare for the extrovertive methods of the *rahasya-vidhi*. The key to their qualification is that they maintain the aware-

¹⁰⁰ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 138.

¹⁰¹ This obscure rite has been analyzed by only a few scholars, including: J. Masson (1969), Lilian Silburn (1988), Paul Muller-Ortega (1990), and Gavin Flood (1993).

¹⁰² J. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa, and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969): 40. Also cited by Flood.

¹⁰³ Cf. Larson's important analysis of the distinction between the nature of religious experience (*brahmāsvāda*) and aesthetic experience (*rasāsvāda*), in his essay, 'The aesthetic (*rasāsvāda*) and the religious (*brahmāsvāda*) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Śaivism.'

¹⁰⁴ Muller-Ortega (1990), p. 47. Cf. Mishra's discussion of *kula-yāga* as a 'sublimation of sexual desire'. *Op. cit.*, pp. 368–369.

¹⁰⁵ See Muller-Ortega's translation of the *cakra-pūjā* in *Triadic Heart*, 61–62.

¹⁰⁶ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 183.

ness that their consort is Śakti herself. If they fall from this elevated state, desire will overcome them, and they will not attain the higher mystical experience that is the goal of the ritual.¹⁰⁷ If, however, they are able to keep their passions in check, then through the yogic fire created during union, the *kuṇḍalinī* will be ignited and ascend up the central channel. In this way, the outer union (*bāhya-maithuna*) reflects an inner union (*antar-maithuna*).¹⁰⁸

As the means to igniting this process, the *dūtī* is understood to play a pivotal role.¹⁰⁹ She has herself been initiated through sexual union with the guru, and, according to certain texts, has thereby attained full enlightenment.¹¹⁰ Having received this transmission from the guru, the *dūtī* is perceived as a vessel of preceptorial power and wisdom. During the *kula-prakriyā*, the *sādhaka* receives empowerment from her *yoni*, identified as the mouth of the *yoginī* (*yoginī-vaktra*).¹¹¹ In this context, human sexual union is interpreted as reflecting the power of Śiva's eternal joy (*ānanda-śakti*) which arises from his union with Śakti. Through *maithuna* the human couple become a fusion (*melaka*, *melāpa*, *saṃghatta*) of the male and female principles of the cosmos. 'Human coitus,' Flood notes, 'becomes identical with the union (*yuganaddha*, *yāmala*) of Śiva and Śakti. The *yogi* or *siddha*, also called a 'hero' (*vīra*), becomes the possessor of Śakti, while the *yoginī* or messenger (*dūtī*) becomes Śakti.'¹¹² During this cosmicized union, the *sādhaka* is empowered and vitalized by his consort. In this way, ordinary bodily processes are perceived as synonymous with those of the body of consciousness. The rhythmic breath of love-making becomes the expansion (*unmeṣa*) and withdrawal (*nimeṣa*) of consciousness.¹¹³ The final product of the rite, the emission of semen, is equated with *visarga-śakti* and the bliss of liberation.

¹⁰⁷ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 184.

¹⁰⁸ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 186–187.

¹⁰⁹ Although the ritual status of the *dūtī* has not been fully explored both Silburn (*ibid.*, 179), and Flood, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*, 287–291, provide textual-based analyses that unpack the core practice and symbolism.

¹¹⁰ David G. White's work on the historical origins, social contexts, and textual foundations for the *yoginī* traditions provides the richest and most nuanced analysis of the multiple functions and meanings of the *dūtī*. See his *Kiss of the Yoginī: 'Tantric Sex' in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), esp. pp. 112–114.

¹¹¹ Flood, *Body*, 291. Cf. Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 173.

¹¹² Flood, *Body*, 286–287.

¹¹³ Flood, *Body*, 291.

In this way, the practices of the *kula-prakriyā* are re-coded as the means by which perfect I-awareness (*pūrṇo haṁ-vimarśa*) is established in and through the body. At the height of orgasm (*kampakāla*), the united couple, Abhinavagupta tells us, is to focus on their 'essential consciousness' and thereby achieve a desireless (*anicchā*) state.¹¹⁴ In this way the couple loses all awareness of inner and outer, male and female.¹¹⁵ They are elevated into a non-dual embrace in which Self and world become the singular pulsation of undulating *śakti*.

Concluding Reflections

Through ritualized union, the Tantric couple, in Muller-Ortega's words, 'physically embody the dyadic wholeness of Śiva.'¹¹⁶ In this way the esoteric ritual becomes a vehicle for harnessing the *visarga-śakti*. At this level of transcendent empowerment, all dualistic distinctions fade away. Through this rite, the Tantric reaches the culmination of his *sādhana*. The engagement in antinomian practices becomes the means to fuel the *udyama-śakti* which fuses within itself expansion and contraction, introvertive and extrovertive, male and female.

This act of physical union is the apex of a long process of bodily training in the Tantric techniques of internal ascension. In the initial stages of this training, the *sādhaka* sits alone, worshipping the Trika *maṇḍala* within his own body. After acquiring competence in these introvertive techniques, he or she then becomes ready for the extrovertive, left-handed rites of the *kula-prakriyā*. Just as the *visarga-śakti* withdraws only to again expand, so the yogin initially interiorizes his practice in order to then ritually embrace the world as the expansion of *śakti*. In this way, the *sādhaka*'s training mirrors the rhythms of the cosmos. The undulation of interior and exterior embodied at all levels of reality—from the undulation of cosmic manifestation to the yogin's own in-going and out-going breaths—is recognized as the pulsation of the divine *śakti*.

¹¹⁴ Flood, *Body*, 285.

¹¹⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.3.21: 'As a man embraced by his beloved woman knows neither the outer nor the inner, so a man embraced by the essence of wisdom knows neither the outer nor the inner.'

¹¹⁶ Muller-Ortega, 'The Power of the Secret Ritual,' 45.

Seeing that the one energy manifests itself in all forms, the yogin eventually transcends all dualistic categories by recognizing the outer and inner worlds as mirror reflections of a single reality. This leads in turn to the recognition that the yogin has assumed the form of the universe:

In me the universe appears like jars and other external objects in a clear mirror. From me everything emanates like the various dreams which arise from sleep. Like a body naturally constituted of hands, feet, etc. I assume the form of the universe. It is I alone who bursts forth in all beings as a luminous form.¹¹⁷

In this illumined state, all opposites invert and fuse. The universe is within the body, and the body is projected as the universe. The inner has become the outer, the withdrawn the expanded.

In a classic Tantric example of the recognition of this two-in-one-ness (*ekam-dvaitam-pratyabhijñā*), this fusing and transcending of all semantic opposites, the 14th-century *siddha-yoginī*, Lalleśvarī, poetically proclaims:

The entire world [the sphere of duality] exists in Śiva [non-dual truth] and Śiva exists in the world.
Whether it is matter (*prakṛti*) or consciousness (*cit-śakti*)
it is all Śiva.
Śiva is in the *mantra*.
Śiva is in the world.
Śiva exists in His fullness (*pūrṇam*) everywhere (*sarvatra*).¹¹⁸

Lalli's poetry provides a challenge to the Western discourse of duality embodied in scholarly theories such as Stace's. As in our analysis of the dynamics of the *upāya-catustayam*, her words reveal that such dualistic notions as introvertive/extrovertive, body/consciousness, and mind/matter are useful only in a relative and qualified sense. With regards to the interpretation of discourses and practices rooted in non-dual, non-Western models that equate matter with consciousness, human with divine, inner with outer, we are obliged to leave Descartes behind.

¹¹⁷ PS 48–49:

Mayy eva bhāti viśvaṃ darpaṇa iva mirmale ghaṭādīni /
Mattaḥ prasaraṭi viśvaṃ svapnavicitratvaṃ iva suptāt // 48
Aham eva viśvarūpaḥ karacaraṇādisvabhā iva dehaḥ /
sarvasmīn aham eva sphurāmi bhāveṣu bhāsvārūpaṃ iva // 49

¹¹⁸ Lalleśvarī, *Lalleshwari: Spiritual Poems by a Great Siddha Yogini*, transl. Swami Muktananda (Gurudev Siddha Peeth: SYDA, 1981): #106.

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‘TARKO YOGĀṄGAM UTTAMAM’:
ON SUBTLE KNOWLEDGE AND THE REFINEMENT OF
THOUGHT IN ABHINAVAGUPTA’S LIBERATIVE
TANTRIC METHOD

Paul E. Muller-Ortega

Abstract

This essay focuses on passages drawn from two important texts of the medieval Śaiva Tantra, the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta. In particular, it examines the ways in which the tenth century Kashmiri theologian of Śaivism articulates views on the Yoga of Tantrism. The approach Abhinavagupta takes directly criticizes the classical Yoga of Patañjali. This he categorizes as artificial, and contrasts it with the ‘natural’ and spontaneous Yoga of Śaivism he here propounds. A particular focus of the essay centers on the role of the mind, intellectual knowledge, and perfected reason, ‘*tarka*’ in the liberative methods here prescribed by Abhinavagupta. The essay touches on the four-fold categorization of *upāya* or liberative methods that is central to this form of Tantric Yoga. As well, it examines the notion of *vikalpa-saṃskāra*, the refinement and purification of mental states intrinsic to several of these *upāya*-s. The essay intends to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the meaning of yoga changed in the early medieval period as a result of the theological innovations of the Śaivas.

There¹ has been much scholarly investigation of different dimensions of Tantra in recent decades.² Equally, the so-called ‘classical’ Yoga

¹ This essay is dedicated with the deepest admiration, respect, and gratitude to Professor Gerald James Larson on the occasion of his retirement. Thirty years have passed since my first meeting with Gerry on the sunlit heaven of the UCSB campus. Even as discipleship has blossomed into deep collegial friendship, nevertheless the awe of the student confronting new knowledge and new forms of understanding under his stern if beneficent tutelage, while the turquoise Pacific ocean played just outside our classroom windows, this is forever imprinted in my being! Thank you, Gerry-ji! Tasmai Śrī Gurave Namaḥ.

² For Hindu Tantra, the interested reader can consult the bibliographies of the following books: Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yoginī: Tantric Sex in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Paul Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Shiva* (Albany: State University

of Patañjali and its sequels has also received much scholarly attention.³ However, at the coincidence of the study of Tantra and the study of Yoga, there remains a gap which represents one of the great desiderata of current Indological scholarship: the investigation of the bases, historical derivations, theological formulations, and textual environments of the many forms of 'yoga' to be found in Hindu Tantric literature.

Scholarship specifically focused on the Yoga of Tantrism has not progressed greatly since Eliade penned his now classic work, *Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom*.⁴ This seminal and pioneering work has now introduced several generations of students to the ideologies of Yoga. Nevertheless, it is now well known that Eliade's depiction of the Yoga of Tantrism in this book is an impressionistic, composite portrait which anachronistically melds together an admixture of materials and practices from historically disparate and quite distant moments of Tantra.⁵ Thus, further study of the forms of mystical praxis, liberative method, and other instantiations of 'yoga' (using the term in its widest and most general sense) that are to be found in the vast literature of Hindu Tantra will add important insights to scholarly understanding.

One approach to such an investigation would examine and trace the specific, philological usages and definitions of the word 'yoga' as this Sanskrit term appears in the āgamic and tantric literature, including the works of its important exegetes and commentators. To my knowledge, this remains to be done in any systematic and complete fashion.⁶ Another approach would investigate the systematic theological

of New York Press, 1989); Douglas Renfrew Brooks, *The Secret of the Three Cities: An Introduction to Hindu Śākta Tantrism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³ Translations and studies of the *Yoga Sūtra* abound and more seem to emerge each year.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Willard R. Trask, trans. (Princeton: Bollingen Series, no. 56, Princeton University Press, 1970).

⁵ One might comment, for example, on the fact that Eliade's emphasis on the system of the six *cakra*-s has assisted in installing and engraving it in popular understanding as *the* version of the Yoga of Tantra. The system of the six *cakra*-s, however, is, as we now know, drawn from a very late Śākta formulation, itself even later formalized in the Bengali Sanskrit text on the six *cakra*-s popularized and commented on by Sir John Woodroffe. Perhaps more importantly, Eliade's book does not take into account much more important dimensions of the Yoga of Tantra, particularly as this was taught and promulgated in the texts of the early, 'high' Hindu Tantra, of which it appears Eliade was largely unaware.

⁶ The interested reader can consult the very interesting articles: Hélène Brunner,

formulations and renderings of the various 'yogas' of Hindu Tantra, (here applying the word etically to mean something like its soteriological methods, liberative techniques, and mystical disciplines leading to ultimate realization). It is particularly to this latter task that the present essay seeks to contribute.

In order to limit the scope of this essay, the investigation herein is centered on data drawn from selected textual passages from two important texts of Hindu Tantra: the *Tantrāloka*⁷ and the *Tantrasāra*⁸ of Abhinavagupta, the tenth century Śaivācārya of Kashmir.⁹ The intent is to touch briefly on issues relating to the 'Yoga' of Tantrism, as well as to a Tantric critique of prior forms of Yogic practice, as these are here exemplified.¹⁰ A particular focus in this essay centers on the role of the mind, intellectual knowledge, and perfected reason in the liberative methods prescribed in these two texts.

'The Place of Yoga in the Śaivāgamas' in P.-S. Filliozat, S.P. Narang, and C. P. Bhatta, eds., *Pandit N. R. Bhatt Felicitation Volume* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994) pp. 423–461; and Navjivan Rastogi, 'The Yogic Disciplines in the Monistic Śaiva Tantric Traditions of Kashmir: Threefold, Fourfold, and Six-Limbed' in Teun Goudriaan, ed., *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Padoux* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) pp. 247–280.

⁷ *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta. Eds. Mukunda Rāma and Madhusūdan Kaul. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, nos. 23, 28, 30, 35, 36, 29, 41, 47, 59, 52, 57, 58 (Srinagar: Research Department, Jammu and Kashmir Government, 1918–1938). See also the following two translations: Raniero Gnoli, trans., *Luce Delle Sacre Scritture* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1972); Lilian Silburn and André Padoux, trans., *Abhinavagupta, La Lumière Sur Les Tantra: Chapitres 1 à 5 du Tantrāloka* (Paris: Publications de L'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Diffusion de Bocard, 1998). The *Tantrāloka* or *Light on the Tantras*, is perhaps the greatest *summa* of Hindu Tantra, and elaborates a system that comes to be known by various names including the Trika-Kaula.

⁸ *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta. Ed. Mukunda Rāma. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. 17. (Srinagar: Research Department, Jammu and Kashmir Government, 1918); See also the translation into Italian: Raniero Gnoli, trans., *Essenza dei Tantra* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1960). The *Tantrasāra* is a summary presentation of the 'essence' of the *Tantrāloka*, written almost certainly after the first much larger text had been composed.

⁹ For additional information about this teacher, the reader can consult: s.v. 'Abhinavagupta', Alexis Sanderson in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987); see also s.v. 'Abhinavagupta', Paul Muller-Ortega in Edward Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁰ Both the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra* can be divided neatly into a first section devoted to the depiction of general Śaiva theory, and the Śaiva theory of mystical practice and Yoga, and a latter section of the text devoted almost exclusively to ritual matters. The textual samplings presented in this paper are drawn exclusively from the first sections of both of these texts.

The Limbs of Yoga: A Tantric View

The ‘Yoga’ propounded by Abhinavagupta in these two texts (and elsewhere in his massive *oeuvre*) is not the *kriyāyoga*, nor the *aṣṭāṅga* Yoga of the *Yoga-sūtra*, though it is clearly related to and informed by both of these (and much else that is found in Patañjali’s text.) Nor is what is taught here particularly centered on the various systems of the *cakra*-s, later to be so widely associated with Hindu Tantra.¹¹ Rather, it is a system of four *upāya*-s or categories of ‘method’, six *aṅga*-s or limbs (or ancillary methods), and a single pre-eminent notion of *sattarka*, the good and perfected reasoning. The soteriological aim of this system can be (somewhat simplistically) stated as two-fold: the recognition and realization of the practitioner’s pre-existing and unimpeded state of identity with Śiva; and the further recognition and enlightened global perception of the omnipresence of Śiva, the ultimate consciousness, to be seen abiding *within* and arising *as* all forms of existence everywhere. Such a realization carries many names: *jīvan-mukti*, liberation in this very life; *bhairavībhāva*, becoming Bhairava.

Abhinavagupta systematically articulates a liberative Tantric method that is both theistic and nondual in its theological presuppositions, and shot through with its own particular brand of devotional intent and flavor in its practice. In sharp contrast to his Pātañjala predecessors, Abhinavagupta will insist on giving primacy to intellectual knowledge in the path that he prescribes. Hence the Sanskrit title of this essay, which quotes a passage from the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra* (quoted in full below p. 191) which exalts ‘*tarka*’ or ‘perfected reasoning’ as the highest limb of Yoga. To be sure, Abhinavagupta’s definition of ‘intellectual knowledge’ is both precise and idiosyncratically different from what that phrase usually denotes. It combines in its scope both a soaring transcendent mysticism with a deeply ‘illuminated’ intellectuality. Thus, Abhinavagupta makes an important place both for the transrational or supra-rational states of mystical attainment, as well as for what might be described as the harmonious translation and fitting expression of such states in the active functioning of the mind and the senses. An important element in Abhinavagupta’s critique of prior forms of Yoga, and of his creative

¹¹ See Dory Heilijgers-Seelen, *The System of Five Cakras in Kubjikāmatatantra 14–16* (Groningen: Erbert Forsten, 1994.)

reformulation of a Tantric liberative path, will thus center on his insistence that such a form of intellectual knowledge or perfected reasoning does, and must, play a central and highly important role in both the journey of mystical praxis, and in the potently lived experience of liberation that is its goal.

As well, Abhinavagupta's system gives pride of place to a concept of liberative grace, technically known as *śaktipāta*, the descent of the *Śakti*, which is understood to empower and make possible every form of liberative method (*upāya*).¹² The *Śakti* or potency here is particularly understood to be the *svātantrya-śakti*, Śiva's unalloyed power of freedom. In the absence of such liberative grace, all forms of disciplinary engagement or strategic effortful practice are bound to fail, or, what is finally the same thing, to fall short of their ultimate goal. Abhinavagupta will confect a vision of tantric liberative attainment that is radically predicated on this concept of freedom: Śiva's freedom to create; his freedom to conceal himself from himself and to thus imprison himself in the contracted and limited self; and his freedom ultimately to reveal himself to himself once again. For Abhinavagupta, the state of lived freedom cannot somehow be painfully and effortfully leveraged from the limited domains of bondage. It can only arise as the free and graceful expression of the field of freedom itself. Thus, any liberative method that does not take into account this understanding remains artificial (*kṛtrima*), and is finally incapable of granting the highest attainments. This does *not* mean that there is nothing to do. Nevertheless, disciplines, methods, and practices based on *kriyā*—doing, action, performance, ritual—are relegated to the lowest level of the classification of *upāya* or liberative methods that he prescribes. All of this deeply marks the landscape of the 'Tantric Yoga': the disciplines, methods, theories, and techniques that are to be found discussed in these two important texts of Śaiva Tantra.

In the course of setting out the 'theory of the practice' of this 'Tantric Yoga', Abhinavagupta takes to task his Pātañjala predecessors and criticizes what he sees as both the inadequacy and the incompleteness of what they proposed and taught. He claims that other systems or soteriological methods are incomplete, leading to partial and incomplete forms of spiritual attainment. None of this is

¹² See TĀ 13 for more on *Śaktipāta*.

surprising, to be sure. What proud *ācārya*, what teaching or system does *not* claim their inherent superiority over all previous and other religious teachings? Nevertheless, what is instructive here is precisely the view that we get of a proponent of a medieval system of Tantra vigorously criticizing on various grounds the classical dispensations of Yoga, and in, so doing, creatively fashioning (and asserting the superiority of) the teachings and liberative methods of his time.

Abhinavagupta details (*Tantrāloka* (*TĀ*) 4, 86–98; 104–109a) what might be called a ‘Tantric’ critique of the *aṣṭāṅga* Yoga (admittedly not the sum total of what is found in Patañjali’s famous text) in a passage that begins by exalting the superiority of *tarka*, ‘perfected reason’, as the highest limb of Yoga. Here he offers an often dismissive yet reasoned critique of the limits and deficiencies of this eight-limbed formulation of Yoga, which is finally demoted by him to a purely secondary role,

Thus, among the limbs of Yoga, there is truly nothing that surpasses *tarka*. [And by *tarka* is here meant] an extraordinarily acute and intense cognition (*parāmarśapāṭavātiśaya*) [that penetrates] ever more deeply within and within. Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, sexual continence, and non-covetousness—these five restraints (*yama*-s) or moral precepts, along with the five disciplines (*niyama*-s), asceticism, and so on, along with the postures (*āsana*) and the various forms of control of the breath or vital force (*prāṇāyāma*), all of these [practices] can serve no useful application (*nopayoginas*) with regard to the direct grasping of the ultimate consciousness. For they are all [practices that are located in and restricted to] an external, outer level of manifestation (*bāhyaviṣṭambhita*). As it is said in the *Virāvalī*[*tantra*], ‘When the sun and the moon [energies of inhalation and exhalation] are completely dissolved, silenced, and reabsorbed, by means of the reabsorption and dissolution of the ordinary awareness into the nature of Śiva, which is awakened consciousness only, and when the living sun, our very own awakened consciousness, has reached the twelfth level [J = of the *dvādaśānta*], then that alone [merits] being called ‘liberation.’ The [strategically engaged and effortful practice of the] control of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) is here entirely useless (*nirarthaka*). Such an [ordinary] process of the control of the breath should therefore not to be practiced, as it pains and afflicts the body. He who knows this secret is both liberated and capable of granting liberation [to others.]’ And further, that which is called the withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*) of the mind and the senses from their objects [futilely attempts] the inward staking or fastening with bonds of what is always already free and unbound. The nature of ‘concentrative fixation’ (*dhāraṇā*) consists in a binding of awareness in a particular place or object. While meditation (*dhyāna*) is the continued flow of knowledge or awareness of that same object. Beyond all this, when all

such meditative objects have vanished, there arises in Consciousness a state of identity with the known object. The absence of the duality of the knower and the known, this is *samādhi* or profound meditative absorption. These three—concentrative fixation, meditation, and deep meditative absorption—are finally of no utility whatsoever (*no kamcidu-payoga*) in the attainment of the Supreme consciousness. But [if the five] restraints (*yama*) and the other practices up to and including the meditative absorption have been here described as being limbs of Yoga, this is because each such preceding limb is a means to attain the next, and so on, in order to serve as a means for the attainment of the last [and most fundamental limb of Yoga] which is the perfected reason (*tarka*). For what burgeons within consciousness, can be transmitted by that very consciousness into the breath, the body, or the mind by means of repeated and sustained practice. But not the other way around, [for imagining that there can be a movement from the external plane of the breath, the body, or the mind] into that consciousness, this is not the right way. Nevertheless, because in our system we accept the universality of the Self (*sarvātmakatva*) which blossoms clearly even within the breath, mind, and body, [for this reason we can allow that] the practices that are based on them [i.e., on the breath, mind, and body] do serve to eliminate their opposite.

This rich passage contains many crucial observations. He begins by reviewing and assessing all of the practices of the eight limbs of the *aṣṭāṅga* yoga. In accord with their accepted designation as ‘external limbs’ of yoga (*bahir-āṅga*), Abhinavagupta declares that the first five such limbs or practices belong to an external level of manifestation, and as such they can be of no assistance in the direct grasping of the ultimate consciousness. Furthermore, after reviewing the last three limbs, he claims that for the Tantric practitioner, even those practices are finally to be dismissed as having no utility (*upayoga*) in the attainment of Ultimate consciousness. For, he tells us, it is the ultimate consciousness itself which must arise from deep within to saturate and transform the body, breath, and mind. In other words, to imagine that one can begin to practice from the external planes of existence alone, and then somehow move successfully into the depths of ultimate consciousness, this is something that he rejects, and with it all forms of yoga that are predicated on such a directionality in their application and practice.

Abhinavagupta is here clearly revealing a bias toward a hierarchical tantric view of reality (to be sure, as so much else in Tantric thought, derived and adapted from the Sāṃkhyan emanationist scheme of *prakṛti*). The outer, more manifest spheres of being are entirely derived from and dependent on the inner and more subtle

levels. What is potent and alive within the supreme consciousness *can* expand out or descend down or move into the more manifest, outer and lower levels. Only in this way, does the liberative and expansive freedom of the light of supreme consciousness radiate and pulsate ‘out’ to fill and pervade the ‘lower’ levels of reality. When this happens, it will set in motion liberative changes in the mind, breath, and body, and in this way the *results* aimed at by the various limbs of the *aṣṭāṅga* yoga will take place spontaneously and manifest themselves without effort in the practitioner.

Quoting from an older tantric text, Abhinavagupta gives the example of *prāṇāyāma*: the control of the breath. The passage asserts that the breath can finally be yogically dissolved and silenced. However, this is not to be accomplished by action or effort on the external level of the breath (i.e., by the ordinary, strategically engaged efforts at *prāṇāyāma*). Rather, it will arise effortlessly as an epiphenomenon or by-product of the reabsorption and dissolution of ordinary awareness in the nature of Śiva. Thus, the passage strongly cautions against the ordinary, forceful practices of *prāṇāyāma* which it rejects as both useless and also afflictive and painful to the body. The critique continues (*TĀ* 4, 104–109a),

With regard to the nondual Consciousness itself, practice is utterly devoid of utility (*abhyāso’ nupayogavān*). [Practice] can only serve to uproot doubt, the impure taint of duality. And, as has been said, the doubts of duality are reasoned away by perfected reason. Thus, if the restraints [and other limbs of yoga] assist and support in the attainment of this perfected reason (*tarka*), then they also may be considered to be a ‘means’. In the Ancient Treatise [the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra*] in the portion of the text that begins with, ‘Neither duality nor indeed non-duality, nor the worship of the *linga*, and so on,’ the Lord says, ‘All that is prescribed or all that is prohibited, the yogas [taught in these other systems] with their various limbs such as the control of the breath and so on, all these practices are artificial and factitious (*kṛtrima*). Therefore, these [systems] are not worth the sixteenth portion of [ours] which is uncreated (*akṛtaka*), and therefore natural and spontaneous. O Queen of the Gods! Here [in our system] the [only] discipline (*niyama*) that is enjoined is this: Let the heart be made steady in the supreme principle, and that [is to be accomplished] in whatever manner or way [that can be obtained].’¹³

¹³ *TĀ* 4, 86–98 and 104–109a:

86 evaṃ yogāṅgamiyati tarka eva na cāparam
antarantaḥ parāmarśapāṭavātīśayā saḥ

Most of the āgamic and tantric texts which Abhinavagupta considers authoritative formulate an alternate system of the *ṣaḍaṅga* or six-limbed yoga. Importantly, this formulation, and the theoretical matrix within which it is embedded, may very well have been a contemporary, alternate formulation to that of Patañjali rather than a later

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- 87 ahimsā satyamasteyabrahmacaryāparigrahāḥ
iti pañca yamāḥ sākṣātsamvittau nopayogaṇaḥ
- 88 tapaḥprabhṛtayo ye ca niyamā yattathāsanam
prāṇāyāmāśca ye sarvametadbāhyaviḥmhitam
- 89 śrīmadvīrāvalau cokaṭaṃ bodhamātre śivātmake
cittapralayabandhena pralīne śaśibhāskare
- 90 prāpte ca dvādaśe bhāge jīvāditye svabodhake
mokṣaḥ sa eva kathitaḥ prāṇāyāmo nirarthakaḥ
- 91 prāṇāyāmo na kartavyaḥ śarīraṃ yena pīḍyate
rahasyaṃ veti yo yatra sa muktaḥ sa ca mocakaḥ
- 92 pratyāhāraśca nāmāyamarthebhyo 'kṣadhiyāṃ hi yaḥ
anibaddhasya bandhasya tadantaḥ kila kilanam
- 93 cittasya viśaye kvāpi bandhanaṃ dhāraṇātmakam
tatsādr̥gjnānasamṛtāno dhyānamastamitā param
- 94 yadā tu jñeyatādātmyameva saṃvidi jāyate
grāhyagrahaṇatāddvaitaśūnyateyaṃ samāhitiḥ
- 95 tadeṣā dhāraṇādhyānasamādhitrayī parām
saṃvidam prati no kaṃcidupayogaṃ samaśnute
- 96 yogāṅgatā yamādestu samādhyantasya varṇyate
svapūrvapūrvopāyatvādantyatarakopayogataḥ
- 97 antaḥ saṃvidi rūḍhaṃ hi taddvārā prāṇadehayoḥ
buddhau vārpyaṃ tadabhyāsānnaiśa nyāyastu saṃvidi
- 98 atha vāsmaddṛśi prāṇadhīdehāderapi sphuṭam
sarvātmakatvāttatrastho 'pyabhyāso 'nyavyapohanam
- 104 tadadvayāyāṃ saṃvittāvabhyāso 'nupayogavān
kevalaṃ dvaitamālinyaśaṅkānirmūlanāya saḥ
- 105 dvaitaśaṅkāśca tarkeṇa tarkyanta iti varṇitam
tattarkasādhanañyāstu yamāderapyupāyatā
- 106 uktaṃ śrīpūrvaśastre ca na dvaitaṃ nāpi cādvayam
liṅgapūjādikam sarvamityupakramya śambhunā
- 107 vihitam sarvamevātra pratiśiddhamathāpi vā
prāṇāyāmādikairāṅgairyogaḥ syuḥ kṛtrimā yataḥ
- 108 tattenākṛtakasyāśya kalām nārganti ṣoḍaśīm
kiṃ tvetadatra deveśi niyamena vidhiyate
- 109 tattve cetaḥ sthiraṃ kāryaṃ tacca yasya yathāstviti

derivation from it.¹⁴ If that is so (and pursuing this point is beyond the scope of the present essay), then the critique and creative formulations of Yoga here examined might be seen not just as later historical reactions to a dominant Pātañjala view of Yoga, but as the later reassertion and further elaboration of alternate streams of perhaps equally old forms of yogic practice. As we have seen, Abhinavagupta follows the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra* (MVUT)¹⁵ in its notion of contrasting the ‘natural’ Yoga of Śaivism to what it considers the ‘artificial’ forms of Yoga, and of particularly privileging and favoring the former as an expression of the reception of Śiva’s grace. Abhinavagupta is both critical and dubious of the salvific efficacy of what he views as the artificial (*kṛtrima*), strategic engagements of the disciplines enjoined in Patañjali and elsewhere in the earlier darśanic prescriptions of Yoga. As this passage shows, he does finally and somewhat grudgingly allow the eight limbs of Yoga a secondary role. After having dismissed their efficacy as methods (*upāya*), he backtracks slightly and allows that they *can* be considered such only in the sense that they support and lead to the attainment of *tarka*, perfected reasoning. The passage quoted from the MVUT conveys the essential teaching: the heart is to be made steady in the supreme principle, and this is to be accomplished in whatever way and by whatever manner. To an important degree what is here being described is the understanding of Yoga that is based on the notion of *samāveśa*: the individual practitioner is ‘taken possession of’ by the

¹⁴ There are quite a number of variant listings of these six limbs of the Yoga of Tantra. In his commentary on *TĀ* 4, 15–16, (KSTS, vol. 3, part 1, p. 14) Jayaratha, the twelfth century author of the *Viveka* commentary on the *TĀ*, quotes a verse which details the six limbs of Yoga as they are here being conceptualized. The verse says in the Sanskrit,

prāṇāyāmaśtathā dhyānaṃ pratyāhāro ‘tha dhāraṇā
tarkaścaiva samādhiśca ṣaḍaṅgo yoga ucyaṭe.¹⁴

In its seventeenth chapter, the MVUT describes Yoga as containing the following limbs: *prāṇāyāma*, *dhāraṇā*, *tarka*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*, *pratyāhāra*. The MVUT is the text Abhinavagupta takes as the most authoritative of the Śaiva revealed scriptures, and his composition of both the *TĀ* and *TS* claim to be based on the authority and teachings of this text. In his commentary on *TĀ* 4, 96 (KSTS vol 3, part 1, p. 102) Jayaratha says: *yogasya svadarśanoktāni ṣaḍ aṅgāni*, thus confirming that it is a six limbed system of Yoga that is proper to the system of the MVUT and consequently to the *TĀ*.

¹⁵ *Mālinīvijayottara Tantram* (MVUT), Madhusudan Kaul, ed, (Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Government, 1922.).

supreme power of consciousness. Once set in motion, it is by virtue of the spontaneous pull of grace, the flow of the supreme freedom, that the individual is yogically transformed as the varied and complex phenomena of yogic practice are manifested.

As Abhinavagupta asserts, all of the limbs of Yoga are in service of the attainment of *tarka*. Abhinavagupta expands on the nature of *tarka* in a passage (*TĀ* 4, 8–16) which again asserts its superiority as the highest (*uttamam*) limb of Yoga,

How, [someone might ask] could Consciousness which is [the supreme subject] which cognizes itself and which is, by its very own nature, composed of reflective cognition, how, we ask, could such a Consciousness itself become the object of such a cognition? Indeed, if there were to appear something of such a form, that [consciousness would, in fact, be] inert and unconscious. In response to such a query, and has been already explained (*TĀ* 2, 8), it is said: the Consciousness of the Self is, by its very own nature, completely full. Moreover, there is nothing whatsoever either to be added or to be taken away from it. However, as a result of his stainless and resplendent freedom, and because of his capacity to accomplish what may appear to be impossible, the Supreme Lord [J = the Supreme Light], skillfully plays at concealing his very own Self. Even if his essential nature is unconcealed, it is precisely that activity of concealing himself—the play of the All-Pervading Lord—that is [what is known as] *Māyā*. It is from that [i.e., *Māyā*, that there arise] the divisions and differentiations that pervade all activities. Thus, the way that the Great Lord manifests his appearance is what is called ‘duality.’ Then, what is known as reflexive cognition (*parāmarśa*) is precisely the abandoning or discarding of such a duality. The wise ones sever the very root of the tree of evil differentiations with the highly sharpened axe of perfected reasoning (*tarka*). This is certain. The awakened ones call this [perfected reasoning] *bhāvanā* or meditative realization. It is [one could say] the very cow [that fulfills] all desires. Such meditative realization (*bhāvanā*) suddenly causes the ultimate reality to burst clearly into view, [this reality which is] beyond all of our imaginings, surpassing our very heart’s desire. As it is taught in the Ancient Treatise, [the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra*] where it says, ‘*Tarka* or perfected reasoning is the highest among the limbs of Yoga. All efforts in its application and practice are praised, for it permits one to discern what is to be avoided (and what is to be adhered to).’¹⁶

¹⁶ *TĀ* 4, 8–15:

- 8 nanu saṃvītparāmarśatrī parāmarśamayī svataḥ
parāmrśyā katham tātthārūpyasrṣṭau tu sā jaḍā
- 9 ucyate svātmasaṃvittī svabhāvādeva nirbharā
nāśyāmapāśyaṃ nādheyam kiṃcidityuditaṃ purā

The Lord's divine sport gives rise to duality and the concealing of the great Self, the light of supreme consciousness. This 'impossible' action is the result of the Lord's freedom and his desire to play in the fields of differentiation and diversity and is called '*Māyā*.' Then, by the process of *parāmarśa*, reflexive cognition, such duality can be discarded. It is this which is achieved by *tarka*. Abhinavagupta tells us that *tarka* is linked to *bhāvanā*, the meditative realization that brings about the abandonment of differentiated states of awareness and permits access to the experience of the ultimate reality which *bhāvanā* 'suddenly causes to burst clearly into view.' As he says (*TĀ* 1, 156),

For what is known as 'liberation' (*mokṣa*) is really nothing other than the revelatory arising of our true essence. And, in turn, that essence is itself nothing other than the consciousness of the Self, nothing else.¹⁷

Thus, there is something that needs to be seen, realized, brought into view, understood, clarified, cognized, and in many ways perceived by the mind of the practitioner. All efforts are thus to be directed to *tarka*, the ultimate limb of Yoga, which will sever the 'very root of the tree of evil differentiations' and bring about this liberative vision and revelatory knowledge.

Vikalpa and Two Kinds of Ignorance and Knowledge

In the theoretical elaboration of this system, the 'tree of evil differentiations' here mentioned by Abhinavagupta comprises the experience

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- 10 kiṃ tu durghaṭakāritvātsvācchandyānnirmalādasau
svātmāpracchādanakrīḍāpaṇḍitaḥ parameśvaraḥ
 - 11 anāvṛtte svarūpe'pi yadātmācchādanam vibhoḥ
saiva māyā yato bheda etāvnvīśvavṛttikaḥ
 - 12 tathābhāsanamevāsyā dvaitamuktaṃ mahēśituḥ
tadvayāpāsanenāyaṃ parāmarśo 'bhidhīyate
 - 13 durbhedapādapasyāsyā mūlaṃ kṛntanti kovidāḥ
dhārārūḍhena sattarkakauṭhāreṇeti nīscayaḥ
 - 14 tāmenām bhāvanāmāhuḥ sarvakāmadughām budhāḥ
sphuṭayedvastu yāpetam manorathapadādapi
 - 15 śrīpūrvāśtre tatproktaṃ tarko yogāṅgamuttamam
heyādyālocanāttasmāttatra yatnaḥ praśasyate

¹⁷ *TĀ* 1, 156:

mokṣo hi nāma naivānyaḥ svarūpaprathanam hi saḥ
svarūpaṃ cātmanaḥ saṃvinnānyattatra tu yāḥ punaḥ

of the manifest realms of duality, diversity and differentiation, all of which are related directly to the important concept of *vikalpa*. In the *TĀ*, a sustained discussion of *vikalpa* takes place (*TĀ* 1. 32–42; 1. 47–51) in the midst of a complicated argument about the nature of two kinds of ignorance and two kinds of knowledge. The argument expounded in the following passage brings the central liberative role of *tarka* and of ‘intellectual knowledge’ yet more clearly into view.

Thus, ignorance is the display or the unfolding of duality, which, because of its unconsciousness or emptiness, is regarded as bondage. For that reason, it is to be completely cut off. This is what is indicated by the [possible second] different [reading of the second *sūtra* as *ajñānaṃ bandhaḥ*.] [On the other hand], there is no such [separate] reality as the so-called ‘liberation’, either conscious or unconscious, beyond, simply, the Self which is completely free. Therefore, this term ‘liberation’ should not be taken to designate any [separate] reality other than being a name [for the freedom of the Self.] However, as the knowledge of the [various ascending or progressively more subtle] reality-levels [enfolded within and as] the knowable object (*jñeya-satattva*) expands and unfurls more and more fully, it [yields] a higher and more subtle knowledge of it [the knowable object]. Thus and to that extent, [such a progressively deepened and refined knowledge] brings about the extinction of the various [levels of] transmigratory existence. ‘I am unsoiled by passion, etc.,’ [says the Buddhist Yogācārin]. ‘I am the inner voidness,’ [says the Mādhyamikan]. ‘I am not the performer of action,’ [says the Sāṃkhyan]. Thus, whether separately or in combination [such different kinds of] knowledge and realization liberate only to a certain degree [but not entirely or completely]. Therefore, even though one may be liberated from such limiting distinctions (*avaccheda*) [which create bondage and ignorance as just described], one is still not [fully liberated] because there still remain other, limiting distinctions [in place to bind one]. Thus, the [truly] liberated one is one who has abandoned all such limiting distinctions. It is that knowledge of the true nature of the knowable object in its entirety, which is free from all limiting distinctions, and which does not permit any form of ignorance [about the knowable object] whatsoever to remain, which grants the true condition of ultimate liberation (*satyamukti*). Moreover, in the teachings of Śiva, both ignorance and knowledge, as referred to [above], may each be considered and understood under two aspects, namely, the aspect ‘related to consciousness’ or ‘spiritual’ (*pauruṣa*) and the ‘mental’ or ‘intellectual’ (*bauddha*). The ignorance related to the ‘contentless consciousness’ or ‘spirit’ is called the ‘*mala*’ or the fundamental, limiting impurity. Though it is born from that [spirit or consciousness], nevertheless it functions as a veil which conceals our own essential Śiva-ness, which is a fullness of consciousness and action. Thus, [‘spiritual’ ignorance] gives rise to a contracted knowing and action appropriate to the *paśu* or bound, transmigratory

individual. Such an ignorance is non-conceptual (*avikalpita*), and it is not connected to the actual functioning of the intellect or the mind because [within it all of the mind's ordinary functions] such as determination or apprehension are absent. 'I know this thus.' When there arises in the mind such a determinate notion, caused by the reflection [of the light of absolute consciousness] as it arises within the limited individual self, confounded by the six limiting sheaths, then such a knowledge is [actually] called [intellectual] 'ignorance.' Intellectual ignorance and spiritual ignorance mutually feed and reinforce one another. When the latent karmic traces (*saṃskāra*) of the bound soul diminish, and as a result of an abiding in the attainment of the supreme state, the spiritual knowledge (*viññānam pauruṣam*) which then blossoms is beyond all limiting and dualizing verbal conceptualization (*nirvikalpakam*). That knowledge which abides in harmonious adjustment (*aucitya*) with the knowledge of the Self—which is itself non-conceptual and fully unfolded—that is the [true] intellectual knowledge. As in the previous case, these two kinds of knowledge mutually feed and nourish one another.¹⁸

¹⁸ *TA* 1, 30–42:

- 30 dvaitaprathā tadajñānaṃ tuccatvādbandha ucyate
tata eva samucchedyamityāvṛtyā nirūpitam
- 31 svatantrātmātirikastu tuccho 'tuccho 'pi kaścana
na mokṣo nāma tannāsyā pṛthahnāmāpi gṛhyate
- 32 yattu jñeyasatattvasya pūrṇapūrṇaprathātmakam
taduttarottaram jñānaṃ tattatsaṃsāraśāntidam
- 33 rāgādyakaluṣo 'smyantaḥśūnyo 'haṃ kartṛtṛijjhitāḥ
iṭhaṃ saṃsavyāśābhyāṃ jñānaṃ muñcati tāvataḥ
- 34 tasmānmukto 'pyavacchedādavacchedāntarasthiteḥ
amukta eva muktastu sarvāvacchedavarjitaḥ
- 35 yattu jñeyasatattvasya jñānaṃ sarvātmanojjhitam
avacchedairna tatkuṭrāpyajñānaṃ satyamuktidam
- 36 jñānājñānasvarūpaṃ yaduktaṃ pratyekamapyadaḥ
dvidhā pauraṣaubuddhatvabhidoḥktaṃ śivaśāśane
- 37 tatra puṃso yadajñānaṃ malākhyam tajjamapyatha
svapūrṇacitkriyārūpaśivatāvaraṇātmakam
- 38a saṃkociḍṛkkriyārūpaṃ tatpaśoravikalpitam
- 38b tadajñānaṃ na buddhyāmsō 'dhyavasāyādyabhāvataḥ
- 39 ahamitthamidam vedmītyevamadhyavasāyini
ṣaṭkañcukābilāṇūthapratibimbanato yadā
- 40 dhīrjāyate tadā tādr̥gajñānamajñānaśabditam
bauddham tasya ca tatpaumsnaṃ poṣaṇīyaṃ ca poṣṭṛca
- 41 kṣīṇe tu paśusaṃskāre puṃsaḥ prāptaparasthiteḥ
vikasvaram tadvijñānaṃ pauraṣam nirvikalpakam
- 42 vikasvarāvikalpātmajñānaucityena yāvasā
tadbauddham yasya tatpaumsnaṃ prāgvatpoṣyaṃ ca poṣṭṛ ca

With regard to the attainment of intellectual knowledge (*bauddha-vijñāna*), the nature of which is a determinate ascertainment [as has just been described], what is primary is the [study of the] *śāstra* alone, as [it is only in the *śāstra*] that the true nature of what is to be known [or: of the truth of the knowable object (*jñeya-tattva*)] is expounded. Even if the inner ignorance, spiritual in nature, were to have vanished or been destroyed by the rituals of initiation [into the Śaiva fold], [nevertheless] because of the persistence of intellectual ignorance, dualizing and limited conceptualization (*vikalpa*) would continue to arise [in the mind]. Thus, [even after having received initiation], as a long as the body continues to exist [there persists the erroneous attribution] of the true nature of the Self to the limited intellect. But not [once the body has ceased] after death, for then there is liberation brought about by the coming to an end of the spiritual ignorance. Alternatively, however, when intellectual ignorance ceases, as a result of the uprooting of the limited conceptualizing (*vikalpa*), *mokṣa* [or liberation in this very life] is certainly attained. This is what is taught by the Lord in the venerable *Nīśāṭana*: ‘But one whose mind remains linked or yoked to limited conceptualization (*vikalpa*) will attain Śiva [only] after the death of the body. But another [whose mind is free from limited conceptualization attains it] now [even as the body continues to exist.]’ And, here what is most important [in this distinction between these two kinds of liberative attainment is the study of the] *śāstra* [which grants the intellectual knowledge].¹⁹

In this complex and very rich set of statements, Abhinavagupta describes the systematic process of the attainment of levels of higher and higher (*uttarottara*) knowledge of the ultimate consciousness as the various limiting distinctions (*avaccheda*) about the Self are progressively removed. Though the practices enjoined in various schools and systems may assist their practitioners in removing such limiting distinctions to a certain degree, only the one who has succeeded in

¹⁹ *TĀ* 1, 47–51:

- 47 tathāvidhāvasāyātmabauddhavijñānasampade
śāstrameva pradhānaṃ yajjñeyatattvapradarśakam
- 48 dīkṣayā galite’pyantarajñāne pauruṣātmani
dhīgatasayānivr̥ttatvādvikalpo’pi hi sambhavet
- 49 dehasadbhāvaparyantamātmabhāvo yato dhiyī
dehānte ‘pi na mokṣaḥ syātpauruṣājñānahānitaḥ
- 50 bauddhājñānanivr̥ttau tu vikalponmūlanāddhrūvam
tadaiva mokṣa ityuktaṃ dhātṛā śrīmānīśāṭane
- 51 vikalpayuktacittastu piṇḍapātācchivaṃ vrajet
itarastu tadaiveti śāstrasyātra pradhānataḥ

removing all such limiting distinctions can be said to be truly liberated. This he equates with the complete knowledge of the true nature of the knowable object (*jñeya*). The fully liberated and realized practitioner attains the capacity to have complete (*pūrṇa*) knowledge of the object of knowledge, rather than partial or incomplete knowledge. Thus, Abhinavagupta is declaring his fundamental epistemological assumptions: depending on the condition of the knower, knowledge can be either binding or liberating. Ignorance is the condition in which there is both an absence of complete knowledge of the Self as the true identity, and also of the unbounded consciousness that resides hidden as the deepest and true reality of the known object of perception. This incomplete knowledge is binding in its nature precisely because of its incompleteness. Freedom, which as we have seen is the intrinsic and most important characteristic of Śiva, of the absolute consciousness, is to be recovered existentially, experientially, mystically by means of knowledge. In other words, the existential dilemma of bondage and transmigration can only be solved, says Abhinavagupta, by a powerful form of knowledge that combines elements of what we could call sensory or perceptual knowledge with a deeply intellectual kind of knowing.

Abhinavagupta is here involved in the elaboration of a liberative program of cultivating mystical awareness and penetrative knowledge, the progressive refinement of vision, which will ultimately culminate in a series of gradated insights into the nature of Śiva, recognitions about the nature of God or Ultimacy. Thus, though he is well familiar, as we have just seen, with the states of isolative, nihilative or extinctional *samādhi* as part of the journey of Yoga, and though his program certainly includes their cultivation and attainment, he is ultimately opposed to a formulation of a liberative Tantric path that is defined solely in terms of the introversive extinction of all mental activity, all insight, or all knowledge.

In order to further clarify his position, Abhinavagupta takes recourse to a traditional understanding that categorizes ignorance and knowledge according to a two-fold typology: *pauruṣa* or 'relating to consciousness' and *bauddha* or 'relating to the intellect'. Thus, this results in four kinds of interrelated epistemological conditions: intellectual ignorance, spiritual ignorance, intellectual knowledge, and spiritual knowledge.

Intellectual ignorance (*bauddha ajñāna*) is the ordinary unenlightened state of partial and incomplete knowledge. As Abhinavagupta

here presents it, it is the limited knowledge that is ordinarily available of the world, as the reality of the perceived or conceived object of perception or conception is incompletely or only superficially disclosed or revealed to the mind.

Spiritual ignorance (*pauruṣa ajñāna*) is of the nature of the *mala*, the fundamental limiting impurity, the so-called *āṇavamala* or root impurity. This is not a substance or object, but is rather of the nature of a contracted awareness, held in place by Śiva's will to contract the infinite consciousness into the form of a limited experiencer, knower, and agent.

Spiritual ignorance is understood to be removed by the initiation. However, its counterpart form of spiritual knowledge (*pauruṣa jñāna*), was not usually understood to be revealed until the death of the body. For in the ordinary Śaiva traditions, initiation was not thought to precipitate any form of revelatory, mystical, or extraordinary knowledge. Moreover, even when initiation had been received and the spiritual ignorance had been removed, intellectual ignorance could still persist. Its removal, therefore, was to be occasioned by the systematic consideration of the statements made by Śiva in the revealed scriptures, the *śāstra*. Intellectual knowledge (*bauddha jñāna*), then, is the attainment of the *śuddhavidyā*: the pure knowledge, the purified wisdom, the pure liberative insight. When the unfolding of intellectual knowledge was completed on the basis of a preceding reception of initiation (the *sine qua non* and basic prerequisite for all that is to be carried out in the Tantric curriculum and spiritual agenda of these two texts), it was then thought capable of bringing about *jīvan-mukti*, liberation in this very life. Abhinavagupta thus seeks to make room in his soteriological system particularly for the illuminated intellectual knowledge which abides in harmonious adjustment and conformity (*aucitya*)²⁰ to the great and mysterious absolute, which is both utterly beyond conceptualization in its own nature, and yet which here, at least in Abhinavagupta's complex treatment of the matter, will still allow for a form of enlightened conceptualization of it.

This is a crucial point with regard to the particular formulation of the Yoga of Tantrism that Abhinavagupta is here elaborating. For, while the common core of Śaiva traditions were content to

²⁰ See *TĀ* 1, 42.

aspire to a liberation that was attainable only after death, the focus of Abhinavagupta's system is on those extraordinarily graced practitioners, yogic virtuosi, who could actually achieve such a liberation in this very life. Its nature is such that the mind, though no longer limited by superficial or unrefined *vikalpa* [divisive or limiting conceptualizations] is still 'intellectually' active and capable of involving the senses and the faculty of perfected reason in an extroversive process of complete penetrative knowledge of the object of knowledge. Thus, the full disclosure of the reality of the known object (*jñeya*) is attained through a condition of unconstrained vision, knowledge, experience and realization in which every object of perception is seen as only Śiva, only the absolute consciousness. Such an extraordinary state of vision and knowledge, fully achieved and finally stabilized, is what Abhinavagupta terms the 'intellectual knowledge'.

Upāya: Liberative 'Method' in Four Differential Modes

In order to further understand the context within which these long statements are made, we touch briefly on Abhinavagupta's theory of *upāya*, liberative method or yogic means. In Abhinavagupta's formulation of the Yoga of Śaivism, the various kinds of *samāveśa*, the various modes in which the upsurge of liberative grace and of the potency of the absolute consciousness arises within individual practitioners, forms a central component of the overall theoretical map of the yogic journey. For Abhinavagupta, the definitive classification is to be found in the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra* where there are several varieties or degrees of intensity of such *samāveśa*.²¹ The four different levels of yogic method or means, *upāya*, for attaining the supreme consciousness are thus arranged in terms of these forms of *samāveśa*.

At the end of First *Āhnika* of the *Tantrasāra* (TS), Abhinavagupta lays out the theory of *upāya* to be addressed in detail in the first five chapters of this text (and importantly also in the first five chapters of the *Tantrāloka*),

It is this very light of consciousness [so composed as has just been described] which, as a result of its utterly unrestricted freedom, causes

²¹ See *MVUT*, Chapter 2.

itself to appear contracted. Having done so, it is then termed the 'atomic' or limited, contracted, transmigratory self (*aṇu*). And by its very quality of freedom, it reveals or causes itself to be illuminated once again, and there appears resplendently as Śiva, as the unlimited and undivided light. In this regard [with respect to this very process of self-illumination or self-revelation just described] by the very force of his own freedom, he can illuminate himself either without any means whatsoever, or by accompanying means. With regard only to the case when he is employing accompanying means, then either will, knowledge, or action constitute the means. Thus, there are three different varieties of illuminative immersion in the absolute (*samāveśa*), [technically known as] the *Śāmbhava* ('related to Śambhu or Śiva'); *Śākta* ('related to the Śakti or divine power'); or *Āṇava* ('related to the limited Self') [means]. It is precisely these fourfold modes [of means to the illuminative knowledge and immersion into the absolute light of consciousness] that are here to be taught and expounded in [proper] sequence.²²

This passage outlines the argument that underpins Abhinavagupta's consideration of Yogic method. In the cosmic sense, it is Śiva alone who freely chooses bondage and the subjection to the limited state of the transmigratory entity known as the *aṇu*, the limited self. Then, out of his own freedom, Śiva chooses to liberate such limited selves by granting them his grace through the descent of the Śakti (*śaktipāta*). The reception of this grace causes *samāveśa*, quite literally the taking possession of Śiva by the limited self. Nevertheless, though the primordial act of granting grace is identical in every case, the experiences of those who receive it vary. *Samāveśa* spiritually imprints the one who receives it with the mark or seal (*mudrā*) of Śiva's liberative grace, which impels the unfolding of various kinds of liberative method or *upāya*. These range from the so-called *Āṇava* or minute or limited, to the *Śākta* or empowered, to the *Śāmbhava* or supreme. As Abhinavagupta tells us each of these is dominated by a particular Śakti or potency of the Lord: the *Āṇava* by the *kriyā-śakti* or potency of action; the *Śākta* by the *jñāna-śakti* or potency of knowledge; and the *Śāmbhava* by the *icchā-śakti* or potency of will. Thus,

²² *Tantrasāra* end of Āhnika 1: sa eva svātantryāt ātmānaṃ saṃkucitam avabhāsayan aṇuriti ucyate | punarapi ca svātmānaṃ svatantratayā prakāśayati, yena anavacchin-naprakāśaśivarūpatayaiva prakāśate | tatrāpi svātantryavaśāt [KSTS page 7] anupāya-meva svātmānaṃ prakāśayati sopāyaṃ vā, sopāyatte 'pi icchā vā jñānaṃ vā kriyā vā abhyupāya iti traividhyaṃ śāmbhavaśaktānavabhedenā samāveśasya, tatra caturvidhamapi etad rūpaṃ krameṇa atra upadiśyate |

this *upāya* classificatory scheme becomes a way of gathering and organizing under a single hermeneutical ‘umbrella’ many different levels and kinds of yogic and liberative practice. Indeed, the scheme of the four *upāya*-s allows for the gathering and unifying of what, at least to our eyes, might appear to be quite different and even contradictory forms of yogic practice.

As Abhinavagupta tells us, Śiva can restore himself to himself either without any form of apparent Yogic method, or with accompanying methods. Aspirants who are liberated without any accompanying means are classified under the so-called *Anupāya* or non-method, or the method of no-practice. In what appear to be the most spiritually prestigious and advanced forms of Tantric liberative practice and soteriological method articulated here by Abhinavagupta, there is the notable absence of the use or employment of any kind of yogic instrument or form of practice whatsoever. Liberation and illuminative knowledge simply arise unbidden and bring freedom and knowledge without any form of application, method, or effort on the part of the one so graced. At the end of *Tantrasāra Āhnika* 2, he says,

The one who firmly and intensely ‘discriminates’ in this way, always indeed [abides in the] immersion in the Supreme Lord [which takes place] without any occasioning means or methods whatsoever. And, for such a one, there is no need whatsoever for the restraints [of any practice], such as that of mantra, devotional rituals of *pūjā*, meditation, or the keeping of disciplinary rules, and so on.²³

Such a no-practice method consists, essentially, in an abiding and spontaneous awakening that takes place at the very summit of the mystical life where the ‘practice’ so to speak, involves abiding in surrender to the Absolute, finally yielding the vestiges of any remaining limited individuality into and as the absolute consciousness. The

²³ *Tantrasāra*, Āhnika 2, KSTS pp. 8–9: ucyate—yo ’yaṃ parameśvaraḥ svaprakāśa-rūpaḥ svātma tatra kim upāyena kriyate, na svarūpalābho nityatvāt, na jñaptiḥ svayamprakāśamānatvāt, na āvaraṇavigamaḥ āvaraṇasya kasyacidapi asaṃbhavāt, na tadanupraveśaḥ anupraveṣṭuḥ vyatiriktasya abhāvāt | kaścātra upāyaḥ tasyāpi vyatiriktasya anupapatteḥ, tasmāt samastamidamekaṃ cinmātratattvaṃ kālena akalitam, deśena aparicchinnaṃ, [KSTS page 9] upādhibhīramlānaṃ, ākrībhiranīyantritaṃ, śabdairasaṃdiṣṭaṃ, pramāṇairaprapaṇcitaṃ, kālādeḥ pramāṇaparyantasya svecchayaiva svarūpalābhanimittaṃ ca, svatantraṃ ānandaghanam tattvaṃ, tadeva ca aham tatraiva antarmayi viśvaṃ pratibimbitaṃ evaṃ dṛdhaṃ viviñcānasya śaśvadeva pārameśvaraḥ samāveśo nirupāyaka eva, tasya ca na mantra-pūjā-dhyāna-caryā-dīnyantraṇā kācit |

Anupāya is the purest expression of Śiva's most potent freedom and its consequences. It shows his capacity instantaneously to reveal himself and to grant liberation in such a way that (at least apparently) no form of effortful practice or disciplinary application is necessary on the part of the one so graced. Instead, freedom, whole, complete and entire, arises from the depths of consciousness and asserts itself definitively and with no impediments thus completely liberating its recipient. Here, the need for yogic practice strategically and effortfully engaged, for method conscientiously applied, for technique with regard to mantra, *mudrā*, and breath have all been transcended and obviated in the spontaneous arising of a fully stabilized condition of illuminative awareness.

When this is the highest ideal of liberative 'method' of Śaiva Tantra, it is not surprising that, as we have seen, Abhinavagupta would take a dim view of the many practices, disciplines, restraints, techniques, and other effortful applications of yogic method as outlined and enjoined by his Pātañjala predecessors.

Similarly, at the conclusion of his description of the *Śāmbhavopāya* Abhinavagupta again insists that the use of strategically engaged practice of *mantra* and other forms of yogic and ritual practice are also absent in the practice of this particular *upāya* as well (*TĀ* 3, 268–271),

He to whom this universe, the entirety of all existing and manifested things, appears as a reflection (*pratibimba*) in his very own consciousness, he is truly the Universal Lord. He whose cognition (*parāmarśa*) is characterized by an eternally arising and undifferentiated (*avikalpa*) [capacity to see and know all things] in this way within himself, he alone [may be said to be] 'sealed' (*mudrītaḥ*) or marked or appropriately destined for the way or method of Śambhu. Such a cognition of the perfectly full I consciousness has been discussed by us; here all other [practices or effortful yogic methods or disciplines such as] the use of mantra, the application of *mudrā*, rituals, worship, and the like have no place whatsoever. The one who again and again resorts to the undifferentiated absorption (*samāveśa nirvikalpaṃ*) attains the condition of Bhairava which, by another name, is known as liberation while still alive.²⁴

²⁴ *TĀ* 3, 268–271:

- 268 samvidātmani viśvo 'yaṃ bhāvavargaḥ prapañcavān
pratibimbatayā bhātī yasya viśveśvaro hi saḥ
269 evamātmani yasyeddr̥gavikalpaḥ sadodayaḥ
parāmarśaḥ sa evāsau śāmbhavopāyamudrītaḥ

However, Abhinavagupta emphasizes that the *Śāmbhavopāya* (and even more so the *Anupāya*) is limited to a very few aspirants, (*TĀ* 3, 288–290a),

Only some [aspirants intensely] purified by the [grace of] the Supreme Lord proceed with confidence on this highest of methods which abounds in the nonduality of Śambhu. Baths, observances of religious vows, the purification of the body, meditative fixation, the use of mantras, the articulation of various paths, sacrificial rituals, oblations, japa recitations, meditative absorption and whatsoever other such differentiated methods can be conceived do not properly belong here [in the *Śāmbhavopāya*.]²⁵

This highest of the three actual methods corresponds only to those aspirants who have received a very high degree of intensity of *śaktipāta* and who can work entirely with the subtlest energies of the will or subtle intentionality (*icchā*) in order to see the entirety of existing things as a reflection within their very own consciousness. Here there is no need for refinement or purification, no need for strenuous restraints or explicit forms of discipline, external practice, or performative methods. Rather, the direct vision of the totality of the cosmos appears as a reflection (*pratibimba*) in the practitioner's awareness. Such a cognition (*parāmarśa*) is here characterized as free or devoid of conceptualization (*avikalpa*) as a result of an immersive possession (*samāveśa nirvikalpa*) by the supreme consciousness that is utterly undifferentiated and beyond all forms of limiting conceptualization. For those not so graced, there are two next two *upāya*-s.

270 pūrṇāhantāparāmarśo yo 'syāyaṃ pravivecitāḥ
mantramudrākriyopāsāstadanyā nātra kāścana

271 bhūyobhūyaḥ samāveśaṃ nirvikalpamimaṃ śrītaḥ
abhyeti bhairavībhāvaṃ jīvanmuktyaparābhidham

²⁵ *TĀ* 3, 288–290a:

288 tadasminparamopāye śāmbhavādvaitaśālini
ke'pyeva yānti viśvāsaṃ pasmeśena bhāvitāḥ

289 snānaṃ vrataṃ dehaśuddhirdhāraṇā mantrayojanā
adhvaktṛptiryāgavidhirhomajapyasamādhayaḥ

290a ityādikalpanā kāpi nātra bhedenā yujyate

Vikalpa-Saṃskāra: *The Refinement of Mental States*

In the exposition of fundamental elements of the *Śāktopāya* and the *Āṇavopāya*, Abhinavagupta repeatedly uses the Sanskrit compound expression ‘*vikalpa-saṃskāra*’, (roughly ‘the refinement or purification of conceptual, diversified states of awareness’)²⁶ in order to articulate the ‘theory of the practice’ of the Śaiva soteriology set out under the rubric of these two forms of method.²⁷ In a previous passage (examined above at p. 195), Abhinavagupta has quoted favorably from early āgamic texts that recommends the potency of the transcendence of *vikalpa*.²⁸ The passage says,

This is what is taught by the Lord in the venerable *Niśāṭana*: ‘But one whose mind remains linked or yoked to limited conceptualization (*vikalpa*) will attain Śiva [only] after the death of the body. But another [whose mind is free from limited conceptualization attains it] now [even as the body continues to exist.]’ And, here what is most important [in this distinction between these two kinds of liberative attainment is the study of the] *śāstra* [which grants the intellectual knowledge].²⁹

This passage draws a quite explicit and sharp contrast between *vikalpa* and its transcendence. However, even as Abhinavagupta quotes this strictly binary prescription with approbation, elsewhere he will also be intent on nuancing this distinction. This he will do in order to

²⁶ It occurs in several variants as well, e.g., *TS*, p. 21: *vikalpaṃ krameṇa saṃskurute*.

²⁷ It is important to note, first of all, that the terms *vikalpa* and *saṃskāra* are both here being used with a different set of connotations than those which attach themselves to these same terms in the earlier literature of classical Yoga. In *Yoga-sūtra* 1. 6, *vikalpa* is counted as one of the five forms of *vyrtti*, and defined as (*YS* 1. 9) *śabdajñānānupati vastuśūnyaḥ vikalpaḥ*. It appears that in the *Yoga-sūtra*, *vikalpa* refers fairly strictly to the notion of images or thoughts conjured up by words but which have no substantial reality ‘behind’ them. The notion of *saṃskāra* in the *Yoga-sūtra* has complicated meanings (3. 9–10) related to notions of residual impressions of past actions captured and held as subtle traces in the deepest layers of awareness. It is important to note that Abhinavagupta’s usage of the notion of *saṃskāra* here clearly and consciously carries overtones of alchemy. For more on the alchemical operations known as ‘*saṃskāras*’ see David G. White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 265 ff.

²⁸ See *TĀ* 1, 50–51.

²⁹ *TĀ* 1, 50–51:

50 bauddhājñānanivṛttau tu vikalponmūlanāddhrūvam
tadaiva mokṣa ityuktaṃ dhātṛā śrīmānīśāṭane

51 vikalpayuktacittastu piṇḍapātācchivaṃ vrajet
itarastu tadaiveti śāstrasyātra pradhānataḥ

allow for a slightly different yogic prescription in the context of these two *upāya*-s: not the utter transcendence of *vikalpa*, but its transformation into what his commentator Jayaratha will call the *śuddhavigalpa*, the purified conceptualization, and what might be referred to as the achieved results of *tarka* in the purified wisdom, the *śuddhavidyā*.³⁰

The explication of the *śāktopāya* (in Āhnika Four of both the *TĀ* and *TS*) gives Abhinavagupta an occasion to nuance the place and purpose of *vikalpa*, and he does so by a detailed explanation of the concept of *vikalpa-saṃskāra*. What we see here is a kind of theoretical ‘x-ray’ of those forms of practice that, rather than seeking the immediate extinction of *vikalpa*, attempt rather to set in motion a process (whether gradual or rapid, whether spontaneous or resulting from effortful and strategic application will depend on the context, as we will see) of the refinement, purification, and expansion of mental states as a path to the attainment of what lies beyond all such conceptuality.

The notion of *vikalpa* is a complex one with numerous denotations and connotations both within this tradition and in the larger ambit of Indian philosophical and theological formulations. Here, *vikalpa* seems to mean not just dualizing forms of conceptual thought expressed verbally. It also seems to mean something like entire states of mind or states of awareness comprised holistically. In this textual environment, *vikalpa* often seems closer in meaning to Patañjali’s notion of *vr̥tti* rather than to the specific idea of *vikalpa* as elaborated in the *Yoga-sūtra* and its commentaries. The notion of *saṃskāra* is here understood as a kind of purificatory working, in the same sense that metals or minerals are ‘worked’ in order to be refined. Thus, *vikalpa-saṃskāra* alludes to the process of refinement, purification, clarification, sharpening, and expansion of such mental states or states of awareness. By means of *vikalpa-saṃskāra* the fundamental constitutive and even axiomatic presuppositions or ‘holdings’ of the yogin’s mind are systematically transformed and refined. There appear to be two purposes here: to allow the mind to enter into states of awareness in which its fundamentally flawed and limited presuppositional understandings are expanded, illuminated, and refined to a very great degree. Simultaneously, the ‘working’ or refinement of the *vikalpa*-s

³⁰ See Jayaratha’s commentary on *TĀ* 1, 24, KSTS edition, vol. 1, p. 57: *tasya ca śuddhavigalpātmav* ‘pi.

is meant to allow access to that which is *avikalpa*, beyond all such even highly refined or subtle yet still finally limiting states of thought and awareness. The following passage (*TĀ* 4, 2–7) offers a significant and detailed explanation,

The one who wishes to penetrate into that realm of the divine nature of the supreme Lord (which has just been described in the previous chapter), should quickly and expeditiously carry out the purification of thought and the refinement of mental states (*vikalpa-saṃskāra*). One such refined or purified mental state produces another which is refined by itself, and then another similar to it, and then even another, and then yet another mental state similar to it in its very nature. Thus, by degrees and through a succession of four different mental states, thought is gradually purified and refined, beginning with an unclear and contracted state, moving then to a state that is about to become clear, then to one that is yet clearer, and then to one that is blossomed and fully expanded into clarity. Then, an even clearer and more expanded state of the mind ensues, until in the end thought becomes clearest, most refined, and most fully expanded. In each of these states of the mind, beginning with the first and least clear, there are intermediate levels. Then, because of this progressive refinement of thought, consciousness which has thus been fortified by this extremely clear, refined, and noble state of thought finally enters into the stainless condition that lies beyond all such differentiated states of mind and thought. And, as a result, for those who practice and meditate in this way with self-reflexivity (*vimṛśatām*) the splendorous fire of Bhairava, whose very nature is this transcendent consciousness, reveals itself in its highest degree of clarity, expansion, and unfolding.³¹

The sequence described here moves from those states of mind or awareness that are *asphuṭa*: contracted and unclear; to the *sphuṭatā-bhāvī*: a state of awareness or thought that is about to become clear;

³¹ *TĀ* 4, 2–7:

- 2 anantarāhṇīkoko 'smin svabhāve pārameśvare
pravivikṣurvikalpasya kuryātsaṃskāramañjasā
- 3 vikalpaḥ saṃskṛtaḥ sūte vikalpaṃ svātmasaṃskṛtam
svatulyaṃ so 'pi so 'pyanyaṃ so 'pyanyaṃ sadṛśātmakam
- 4 caturṣveva vikalpeṣu yaḥ saṃskāraḥ kramādasau
asphuṭaḥ sphuṭatābhāvī prasphuṭaṃsphuṭitātmakam
- 5 tataḥ sphuṭatāro yāvadante sphuṭatamo bhavet
asphuṭātau vikalpe ca bhedo'pyastyāntarālikah
- 6 tataḥ sphuṭatamodāratādrūpyaparivṛmhitā
saṃvidabhyeti vimalāmaṇikalpasvarūpatām
- 7 ataśca bhairaviyaṃ yattejāḥ saṃvitsvabhāvakam
bhūyo bhūyo vimṛśatām jāyate tatsphuṭātmatā

to the *prasphuṭa*: to a yet clearer state; to the *sphuṭita*: one that has expanded into clarity. It continues then with the *sphuṭatara*: the yet clearer state of awareness; and finally, the *sphuṭatama*: the clearest state of awareness. Here thought has expanded, it has been refined and clarified and unfolded and the mind stands in a state of expansion. Abhinavagupta further states that there are numerous intermediate phases in between each of these many states of the progressive clarification and refinement of awareness. It is from here that the movement both to an illuminated and completely clarified state of awareness in which the mind somehow holds and reflects and contains the light of consciousness as well as a movement entirely out of the domain of *vikalpa* can take place and the mysterious traverse into the transcendence of the *avikalpa* occurs.

Thus, the description of *vikalpa-saṃskāra* reveals the sequence of liberative attainments that, beginning with contracted, unclear, and limited states of awareness and thought (*asphuṭa*), lead progressively and systematically toward the liberative attainment of both the most clear, expanded, and refined level of thought, and from that threshold into the transcendence finally of any form of *vikalpa*-constructed state of awareness in the attainment of the *avikalpa*. Though there are many other dimensions to the Śaiva practices of meditative realization (*bhāvanā*), this remarkable passage describes the great traverse of awareness as the very foundation of any and all such specific liberative practices. Beginning from whatever state and stage of awareness that the practitioner finds himself in, the movement is clear: awareness must be refined, clarified, expanded, made subtle and profound. And this process is a systematic one in which each such state gives rise to the next and the next until the very summit of awareness is both discovered and entered into. Because the *śāktopāya*, the Empowered method which is here being described, is controlled or dominated by the potency of knowledge, the *jñāna-śakti*, it is not surprising that both the method of attainment and the summit state of mystical attainment thus reached are here parsed out in terms of forms of illuminated, refined, and subtle knowledge.

As well, the description of *vikalpa-saṃskāra* could be seen as offering a theoretical outline of what takes place in both the application of *tarka*, the attainment of perfected reasoning, and in the practice of *bhāvanā*, the process of meditative realization. The clarifying and penetrating vision refines by stages until the true nature, the true essence of the perceived, conceived, or meditated object of knowledge is

brought completely into view. Here, finally, the clarified understanding of the ‘object of knowledge’ will grant the purified vikalpic wisdom, the *śuddhavidyā*. As well, it reveals the avikalpic reality of the transcendent, aconceptual, and infinite light of consciousness which is now seen, understood, and viewed *as* the very object of knowledge itself. Such a vision offers complete knowledge, the achieved intellectual knowledge which is such that the object of knowledge now translucently reveals itself as being composed of ultimacy, even in what might previously have been judged to be its most superficial, external, and gross levels of manifestation.

Abhinavagupta makes a further clarification of the nature of *vikalpa* (*TS Āhnika* 4) in the following terms:

When, in order to enter into the very form [of consciousness] which has just been described [in the previous chapter], one refines by degrees and gradually the state of the mind and thought, then one should employ the means (*upayoga*) of meditative realization (*bhāvanā*) in its various successive levels of application, preceded by the teachings granted by the True Master (*sadguru*), the True Revealed Scripture (*sadāgama*), and the True profound insight (*sattarka*) [into the nature of things as they are.] Consider the following: if living beings suppose themselves to be in a state or condition of bondage, such a supposition on their parts arises entirely as a result of the force of a fundamental thought or state of mind (*vikalpa-balāt*) on their parts. Moreover, that very supposition [that they are bound] is itself the cause of their continued condition of transmigratory bondage. However, if an opposite mental state or thought arises, it can expel that thought or mental state which is the very cause of continued transmigration and it can thus be the cause of the arising of spiritual goodness. And such a thought or mental state is as follows: That which transcends the entirety of all of the principles (*tattva*) of reality whose nature is limited and bounded, from [the earth principle] up to the Śiva principle, that is the Supreme Reality composed only of the unbounded and unlimited consciousness. That is the place where all things are established in their respective differences; that is the vital energy (*ojas*) of all; by means of that everything breathes, and that alone I am (*AHAM*); because of that I transcend everything, and because of that I am everything.³²

³² *Tantrasāra* Āhnika 4, KSTS p. 21: tatra yadā vikalpaṃ krameṇa saṃskurute samanantaroktasvarūpapraveśāya, tadā bhāvanākramasya sattarkasadāgamasadgurū-padeśapūrvakasya asti upayogaḥ | tathāhi vikalpabalāt eva jantavo baddham ātmānam abhimanyante, sa abhimānaḥ saṃsārapratibandhahetuḥ, ataḥ pratidvandvīrūpo vikalpa uditaḥ saṃsārahetuḥ vikalpaṃ dalayati iti abhyudayaḥ | sa ca evaṃ-rūpaḥ

The emphasis on *vikalpa* here is striking. The practice at this level is clearly involved in the specificities of the *vikalpa-saṃskāra* just described. Here Abhinavagupta adds additional details: beings are bound because they hold the *vikalpa* that they are bound. In order to remove this *vikalpa*, the yogin must entertain an opposite *vikalpa*. The method or way of knowledge here involves the attaining to and holding of this opposite *vikalpa* which is here described as the process of accessing and standing in identification with great *AHAM*, beyond all limited principles, the supreme reality composed only of consciousness, the place that holds together all different things, the vital energy of all, that which breathes everything.

On Subtle Knowledge: The Dual Vikalpa

In a further clarification, Abhinavagupta makes precise the twofold nature of *vikalpa*: it is both constructive of intellectual ignorance, *and* the basis of the intellectual knowledge. He says, (*TĀ* 4, 109b–114a),

Thus, in order to destroy the cognition or perception of duality, the Supreme Lord constantly abides directly cognizing his own stainless essential being. This cognition of his own true being can either take place completely without recourse to the senses and their corresponding objects (in which case there is the *nirvikalpa*). Or, alternatively, it can take place in relation to them. In this latter case, (when his cognition of his own true being is accompanied by or dependent upon or in relation to the senses and their corresponding objects), then as a result of his own supreme freedom, there arises *vikalpa* (as differentiated states of thought and awareness.) [And that *vikalpa* can be of two different sorts.] The *vikalpa* which is known as ‘nocturnal’, that is to say related to *māyā*, of itself causes difference to appear in and as the stream of all existing things which clearly reveal themselves within the pure and free jewel of the Self. But when *vikalpa* manifests itself as the awareness, ‘All this am I’, then the unitary field of the Self, heavy or laden with all existing things, then becomes the purified wisdom (*śuddhavidyā*). Such a *vikalpa*, consisting of the purified wisdom shining clearly is precisely what suppresses the (nocturnal, mayic) *vikalpa* which causes differentiation.³³

samastebhyaḥ paricchinnasvabhāvebhyaḥ śivāntebhyaḥ tattvebhyo yat uttīrṇam
aparichinnasamvinmātrarūpaṃ tadeva ca paramārthaḥ, tat vastuvyavasthāsthānam,
tat viśvasya ojaḥ, tena prāṇīti viśvam, tadeva ca aham, ato viśvottīrṇo viśvātmā ca
aham iti |

³³ *TĀ* 4, 109b–114a:

We see here the theme of the ambiguity and ambidextrousness of *vikalpa*. The contrast could not here be more clear. While acknowledging the *nirvikalpa/vikalpa* polarity, this passage adds a further distinction: between the ‘nocturnal’ *vikalpa* which is productive of intellectual ignorance, and the *vikalpa* that consists of the purified wisdom which suppresses such intellectual ignorance. As he has made clear (in the passage quoted above from *TĀ* 1, 32 ff.), intellectual ignorance is not suppressed or eliminated merely by the removal of the spiritual ignorance. For Abhinavagupta, the true illuminative knowledge does not arise when the root impurity or *mala* (the basis of the spiritual ignorance) is silently destroyed by initiation. Rather, it must be cultivated and made to arise as the expansive and illuminative consequences of that destruction of the *mala*, the absence of which now permits in the practitioner’s mind a newly given capacity to know.

Moreover, like all the other agents of the constriction of the great Self into the finiteness of the limited karmically bound awareness, the *vikalpa* itself must ultimately be seen to be composed of nothing other than Consciousness. To admit that it is ultimately or essentially made or composed of anything else is to fatally mar the fundamental nondualism of Abhinavagupta’s theological system. However, if *vikalpa* is primarily seen here as both an agent and a consequence of limited, constrictive and unclear states of awareness, at the same time, Abhinavagupta makes a place for the notion of subtle, liberative knowledge that retains an intellectual character and which yet does not partake of the limiting nature of ordinary, ignorance-producing *vikalpa*-s. The theological dance here is to maintain both of these forms of *vikalpa* in their proper relation to each other. This

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- 109b evaṃ dvaitaparāmarśanāśāya parameśvaraḥ
 110 kvacitsvabhāvamamalamāmṛśannaniśaṃ sthitaḥ
 yaḥ svabhāvaparāmarśa indriyārthādyupāyataḥ
 111 vinaiva tanmukho ‘nyo vā svātantryāttadvikalpanam
 tacca svacchasvatantrātmaratnanirbhāsini sphuṭam
 112 bhāvaughe bhedasamdhātṛ svātmano naiśamucyate
 tadeva tu samastārthanirbharātmakagocaram
 113 śuddhavidyātmakam sarvamevedamahamityalam
 idam vikalpanam śuddhavidyārūpaṃ sphuṭātmakam
 114a pratihantīha māyīyaṃ vikalpaṃ bhedabhāvakam

might lead some to conclude that the kind of 'knowledge' that is at stake in the way of knowledge, the *śāktopāya*, is merely the ordinary intellectual knowledge of the constricted self. To counteract such an error, which would reduce the salvific path of the Śaivas to a merely intellectual discovery in the ordinary sense of the word, (in other words, that all that is at stake here is an ordinary form of intellectual realization), Abhinavagupta makes the precision that the way of knowledge is about subtle knowledge, or what is elsewhere known as the purified wisdom, the *śuddhavidyā*. As he says (in *TĀ* 1, 144),

Moreover, the means of knowledge [the *śāktopāya*] is not to be regarded as ignorance. Rather, [it is a method that consists of or employs] subtle knowledge. The highest [method, the *sāmbhavopāya*, described in *Āhnika* 3] is composed of the will.³⁴

In other terms, one might say that the movement of the mind that is here being described is not horizontal: from a wrong thought about something to a right thought about it that is still held in a mind that is characterized by limited and constrictive ignorance. Rather, it is about a gross or superficial thought about something (about anything) held within the mind of the initiated practitioner whose root ignorance has silently been removed by initiation. By holding a thought in such a mind, and by allowing the progressive refinement, clarification, and subtilization of that thought to take place, it finally and ever more clearly yields the perception that the object in question is in fact nothing more than the great consciousness. Thus, the nature of the *śuddhavidyā* or of the refined *vikalpa* that is in consonance (*aucitya*) with the great consciousness is that it allows that consciousness actively to both know and recognize itself within the domain of thought and knowledge, and not just within the transcendent domain of the silence of that ultimacy. This is a fundamental and important shift in the Indian depiction of mystical states of salvific knowledge.

Thus, this vertically penetrating form of knowledge, which moves through progressive layers of refinement to discover the true essence (*svarūpa*) of consciousness as the essence of every perceived and knowable object, comes to be known as well as *sattarka*, the true reason.

³⁴ *TĀ* 1, 144:

jñānasya cāpyupāyo yo na tadajñānam ucyate
jñānam eva tu tad sūkṣmaṃ paraṃ tvicchātmakam matam

What is ordinarily known as ‘*tarka*’ in the philosophical schools of Indian logical disputation: reasoning, logical knowledge, intellectual speculation, involves what we have termed a kind of ‘horizontal’ confrontation between so-called ‘false’ knowledge and ‘true’ knowledge, between ‘wrong’ views and ‘right’ views. Naturally, Abhinavagupta is well familiar with this and makes full use of what might be called an ‘ordinary’ *tarka* in his own argumentation with his philosophical opponents. But what is here being labelled as ‘*tarka*’ as the highest limb of Yoga, is not this sort of intellectually speculative, logically confutational form of knowledge. Rather, the deepest *vikalpa*, the *śuddhavidyā* or purified knowledge, which has sequentially entered into the object of knowledge so deeply that it has uncovered and brought to the light of both the senses and the mind the constitutive ultimacy of consciousness of which it is finally composed, *that* is the *sat-tarka* that is so praised by Abhinavagupta, and which is highlighted by him as being the highest and most important limb of Yoga.

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MEDITATING MANTRAS: MEANING AND VISUALIZATION IN TANTRIC LITERATURE

Sthaneswar Timalisina

Abstract

This essay explores the relationship between Tantric and Patañjalian Yoga systems, focusing upon the Mantra practice. Exploring the polyvalent nature of meaning in Tantric texts, this essay discusses the meditative aspects of mantra-recitation, demonstrating the complex interplay of reflection with numerous visualizations. Two major aspects of mantra practice, the internalization of prāṇic forces while focusing upon different centers and reciting mantras, and the reflection upon multiple meanings, bring the Tantric concept of Mantra practice to the core of Yogic meditation. This essay centers upon the sixfold meaning of a mantra, recognized within the Śākta tradition as a process of identification of the practitioner with the deities, the *maṇḍala*, and the cosmos.

Inside the Mantras

Yoga practices are seen as instrumental to attaining esoteric experience in various spiritual traditions of classical India. A six-fold yoga system evolved in Tantras, paralleling the eightfold yoga system of Patañjali.¹ While some streams of Tantric tradition hewed to the six-fold system, others, nonetheless, adopted the framework of Patañjali while modifying definitions of the eight limbs.² The Kashmiri Tantric tradition developed a distinct variety of meditation, relying upon ‘three means’ (*upāya-s*), focusing on aspects of will, knowledge, and

¹ The Śaiva(-Śākta) Āgamas, e.g., *Mālinīvijyottaratantra* (see chapter 2), the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas, e.g., *Viṣṇusamhitā* (see chapter 20, verses 57–58, 61–62, 68–72), the Buddhist Tantras, e.g., *Guhyasamājatantra* (Chapter 18, verse 140), all highlight the six-fold path of yoga. In this, *yama*, *niyama* and *āsana* are removed, and *tarka* or *anusmṛti* are inserted as limbs of yoga.

² See *Prapañcasāraṇatantra*, chapter 19; *Netratantra*, chapter 8; *Mṛgendratāntra*, *Yogapāda*; *Mahākālasamhitā*, *Guhyakāṭikhaṇḍa* (pp. 300–325) for the eight limbs of Yoga in Tantric literature.

action.³ All these methods found in Tantric literature include visualization of, and reflections upon the meaning of Mantras as a part of yoga.⁴ In this essay, I will primarily focus upon Mantra-meditation found in the Śākta Tantras.

Mantras play a significant role in both Vedic and Tantric traditions. However, Tāntrikas understand the recitation (*japa*) of mantras somewhat differently from their Vedic counterparts, whose primary concern is the accuracy of audible vocal expression.⁵ Seeing the audible expression of mantra as a less powerful stage of practice, Tāntrikas instead place primary focus on mantra repetition (*japa*) as an inner visualization informed by the semiotic insight revealed by the authoritative texts and teachers of the tradition. This joining of *japa* with meaning is one of the primary Tantric means by which the mind of the initiate attains the goal of yoga: to turn inward, away from the most extroverted form of common speech, and to rest in the true nature of consciousness.

Recitation is considered the highest form of ritual in the *Bhagavadgītā* (BG),⁶ while *Yogasūtra* (YS) considers it to be nothing less than a means for self-realization. Even though the references in BG and YS support that *japa* and reflection coincide,⁷ it is not explicit whether YS originally defines *japa* as a practice that includes reflection upon the meaning of the mantra, or whether *japa* and reflection upon its meaning are two separate acts.⁸ Nevertheless, these two appear

³ Based upon the *Mālinīvijayottara* framework, this threefold division of yogic methods is common to the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta, and the *Śivasūtravimarsinī* of Kṣemarāja.

⁴ The practice of mantras is generally considered as a form of yoga in the Śaiva traditions (see Oberhammer 1989, 204–223). Some Tantras explicitly mention *japa* (recitation) as a limb of yoga (see *Jayākhyasamhitā* 33.11; *Mrgendragama*, *Yogapāda*, verse 3). See Muller-Ortega 1992, 227–245 for the nature of mantra practice in Tantras, and Muller-Ortega 2002, 213–230 for a Kashmiri version of Tantric meditation. For a general introduction to mantras, see Alper 1989, 1–14, 249–294. For discussion of the notion of speech in Tantric tradition, see Padoux 1990 (specifically chapters 1, 3–5, and 7).

⁵ *Śikṣā* texts on Sanskrit phonology deal solely with Vedic texts. The purpose of these texts is to teach the exact pronunciation of mantras, so that the Vedic ritual can culminate in its intended result.

⁶ *Yajñānām japayajño 'smi*, *Bhagavadgītā* (BG) 10.25.

⁷ A line in BG, *om ity ekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran*, (BG 8.13) supports that recitation of *praṇava* and reflection upon the Lord coincide. This is conceptually closer to *tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam*. YS 1.28.

⁸ In YS 1.28, the *Vyāsabhāṣya* interprets mantra practice as having two separate actions, counting and reflecting upon its meaning: *praṇavam japaṭaḥ praṇavārthaṁ ca*

together in the same *sūtra* in YS, sufficiently proximate to support the argument that these acts are performed together. YS interprets this reflection as upon the Lord (*Īśvara*).⁹ It does not categorize *japa*, nor does it consider the multifold meanings of a mantra, and YS is further silent about the visualization of *maṇḍala*-s and various *cakra*-s within the body while chanting mantras. Tantric texts, in contrast, are explicit: *japa* is identical with reflection upon the meaning of the mantra. This understanding results in the practitioner's identification with the deity in multiple iconic forms, the *maṇḍala*, and the world, all recognized as the body of the practitioner. Thus, following Tantric texts, recitation of a mantra is not merely counting beads, but merging into divine consciousness that manifests in the form of the world, in the physical form of the practitioner himself, and in the form of the ritual-altar or *maṇḍala*.

Mantra practice rests upon two essential aspects: a) inward vocalic practice, moving from external utterance to inner feeling, and b) realization of its multiple meanings, requiring more and more complex visualizations. Sanskrit grammarians understand speech to comprise multiple levels, from that which is uttered aloud to its most subtle form, identical with pure-awareness.¹⁰ Tantra elaborates on this concept and constructs a hierarchy of *japa*, with the audible recitation of mantra considered less potent and of a lower order than silently uttering and feeling the mantra inside, which may result in a state of peace or attainment of liberation. The fact that some Tantras relegate audible chanting to the performance of black magic suggests again that audible repetition is considered by Tāntrikas to be a lesser form of mantra practice.

bhāvayataḥ (having counted *praṇava* and having reflected upon the meaning of *praṇava*). Nonetheless, this *sūtra* can also be interpreted as the second part of the *sūtra* elaborating upon the first, that is, recitation as a reflection upon the meaning of the mantra (*praṇava* in this case).

⁹ The term *tat* in YS 1.28 refers to *Īśvara*, which in itself is a technical term referring to a particular *puṣa* who is eternally free from *kleśa*-s, *karmavipāka*, and *āśaya*.

¹⁰ Bhartṛhari seems to have accepted only three levels of speech: *paśyantī*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikhari*. The concept of *parāpaśyantī*, however, appears to be contemporaneous, as it appears in the Vṛtti of *Vākyapadīya*. Somānanda argues against this triadic nature of speech, in which *paśyantī* is posited the highest speech, *śabda-brahman*. Later grammarians, such as Nāgeśa, advocate four levels of speech, accepting *parā* as the highest form.

Speech possesses four levels: *parā* (transcendent), *paśyantī* (seeing), *madhyamā* (internal verbalization expressed in the middle ground between outside and inside, and heard by the practitioner but not by others), and *vaikhari* (outer expression).¹¹ The *parā*, or transcendent speech, is pure awareness in itself, and, since within this state the act of reflection or recitation cannot occur, *japa* is performed only in the three other stages. The three stages of recitation are also categorized as *vācika* (uttered out), *upāṃśu* (inner expression), and *mānasa* (mental).¹² Long mantras as well as prayers are recommended for chanting aloud. This audible uttering calms the senses which are fully engaged outside enjoying external objects, and leads the mind to its true nature, consciousness-in-itself.

While both Vedic and Tantric traditions view mantra as secret speech,¹³ Tantras understand mantra as having the nature of expansion and contraction, an experience that encapsulates all forms of imagination.¹⁴ In *vibhava* (expansion), the mantra is in its glory, of the nature of reflection in which all words, all thoughts, all imaginations are enveloped in an awareness that is identified as that experience which permeates all instantaneous cognitions. The person who

¹¹ *Yoginīhrdaya* (YH), the primary text being considered throughout this study, divides speech into four and equates it with four deities: *Ambikā*, *Vāmā*, *Jyēṣṭhā*, and *Raudrī*. YH 1.36–38. *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* (KKV), along with the commentary *Cidvallī* of *Naṭanānanda*, elaborate upon this concept in KKV 20–27. Abhinavagupta explains the three stages of speech, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikhari*, as identical with the three Trika goddesses *Parā*, *Parāparā*, and *Aparā*. *Tantrāloka* 1.271–272.

¹² Internal chanting of mantras during rituals is also prescribed in *Brāhmaṇa* texts. *Upāṃśu*, as a subtle or secret reading of mantras, can be found in the *Śatapatha* and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. (Monier-Williams 1899, 212, row 2). The *Vṛtti* in *Vākyapadīya* 2.19 interprets *upāṃśu* as: *tatra prāṇavyṛtṭyanugrahe saty eva yatra śabdārūpaṃ parair asaṃvedyaṃ bhavati tad upāṃśu* (While supported with the functioning of *prāṇa*, when the form of sound gets unrecognizable, that [is considered as] *upāṃśu*). The interpretation of *mānasa* in Tantras resembles that of *paramopāṃśu*: *antareṇa tu prāṇavyṛtṭyanugrahaṃ yatra kevalam eva buddhau samāviṣṭarūpo buddhyupādāna eva śabdātmā tat paramopāṃśu* (devoid of the support of the functioning of *prāṇa*, when the sound in essence is dissolved in the very intellect (*buddhi*), having intellect as material cause, that word in essence [is considered as] *paramopāṃśu*). *Vṛtti* in *Vākyapadīya* 2.19.

¹³ Mantra as a secret speech can be derived from the verbal root *trāṇī* *matrī* *gupta* *bhāṣaṇe*. Maheśvarānanda quotes an anonymous source defining mantra as *manana-trāṇadharmin*, or that which is of the character of protection if being reflected upon. (*Mahārthamanjari* [MM] 49). Another definition significant in this context is *saṅkalpa-pūrvakoṭtau nādollāso bhaven mantrah* (the manifestation of sound at the first step of volition). Quoted from *Rājarājabhāṭṭāraka* in MM 49.

¹⁴ *Mananamayī nijavibhave nījasāṅkoce bhaye trāṇamayī / kavalitaviśavikalpā anubhūtiḥ kāpi mantrasābdārthaḥ //* MM 49.

is practicing mantra has, by his own free will, his glory of expansion and contraction as the two states in which what is expanded is the development and blossoming of the complete I-sense which is the mingled form of the world and whatever is beyond, and that is what the Tantras call lordship. In this state of Śivahood, mantras are inseparable from reflective awareness. In the state of contraction (*saṅkoca*), mantras protect the bound individual who feels incomplete, and who, due to this limitation, possesses fear.

During the course of practice, mantras interact with the subjective awareness of the practitioner. The immediately experienced individuality consists of personal, physical identity; the second level of individuality comprises social awareness in which family members or property, name and fame, all emerge as self-identity, while the third identity is the inner I-sense (*ahaṁkāra*).¹⁵ *Japa* supports the individual consciousness in a shift inwards from its external form, allowing it to dissolve and merge into its essential nature. The awareness-in-itself that emerges when mantra practice is fully resonant is the divine consciousness in which the practitioner experiences himself as the deity being visualized: this experience is what a mantra means. Mantra practice culminates with the aspirant recognizing himself in the form of the mantra. There are further, higher levels of subjective awareness through which a practitioner ascends in the course of his practice before attaining complete I-ness, the Śiva state.¹⁶

According to the Tantras that teach mantra as a part of yogic practice, mantra awareness not only encompasses all instances of cognition, but also permeates the awareness manifesting in various levels of individuality. Like any individual, the mantra is also considered to have a body and consciousness. The phonemes are considered to be the body, the physical appearance of the mantra, while the awareness that has the powers of knowledge and action vibrant in its true form is the inner soul of mantras.¹⁷ The goal of mantra practice is to recognize this pure awareness. In mantra experience,

¹⁵ This categorization of individuality relies upon *Virūpākṣyaapañcāśikā* (VirP) 1.3, which attributes six levels to the I-sense.

¹⁶ For a brief treatment on the *pramāṭṛs*, see *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* (PH) 3; *Tattvasaṅgraha* (TS) of Sadyojāta (Verses 29–53) with the commentary of Aghoraśivācārya. Generally, the *pramāṭṛs* are *sakala*, *pralaya*kala, *vijñāna*kala, *mantra*, *mantrēśvara*, and *mantramahēśvara*.

¹⁷ See Kṣemarāja's commentary on *Śivasūtra* (ŚS) 1.22; 2.1; 2.3. *jvālitaḍṛkkartṛtvāt tattvaṃ mantrākhyam etad dhi*/TS 32.

the practitioner dwells in this inner state of consciousness while perceiving the outside world. The purpose of *japa* is, in fact, to recollect this awareness.¹⁸ Through *japa*, the practitioner comes to rest upon the divine heart, awareness-in-itself, and then returns to the realm of the mundane.¹⁹ This immersion and return supports the elevation of his mind, allowing all instances of awareness to reside in 'consciousness only'.²⁰ In this way, *japa* is defined by the Tantras as a process in which the practitioner gradually becomes aware of the true nature of mantra itself: mantra loses its objective appearance and manifests as the true heart of the practitioner himself. In this way, mantra is the immanent awareness that encapsulates all categories that lead the practitioner to reside in complete I-ness (*pūrṇāhantā*).

Tantra adopts a specific model of categorization in which the world appears in a triad, with the Supreme Reality transcending it. Mantras can be expressed in three levels, the fourth being awareness-in-itself. Speech is likewise categorized into three external manifestations while the fourth, being the true nature of speech, is consciousness-in-itself. Furthermore, in the Trika and Tripurā traditions, the deities are also visualized in a triad. The fourth and supreme deity transcends the triad, which is her own body and which represents the three potencies of action, knowledge, and volition.²¹ While action is the most visible form of divine power, a yogin, while reflecting upon the true nature of mantra, endeavors to dissolve the power of action into the power of knowledge and that, into the power of will. These powers are ritualized as goddesses who are worshipped in a triad that varies according to the central, highest deity.²²

¹⁸ *Kevalam upapāditamantrasvarūpaṣarāmarśo japa ity ucyate / mantrasya ca vaiśvātmānubhūtirūpatvāt sarvo 'pi vāgyavahāras tatparāmarśātmatayaiṣopapadyate / Parimala on MM 49.*

¹⁹ *Kathā japaḥ ŚS 3.27.*

bhūyo bhūyaḥ pare bhāve bhāvanā bhāvayate tu yā /

japaḥ so 'tra svayaṃ nādo mantrātmā jāpya īdṛśaḥ // Vijñānabhairava 145.

²⁰ *Spandakārikā* (SK) 2.1–2 with *Spandanīya* of Kṣemarāja.

²¹ For various interpretations of Tripurā, see KKV 12–14, 18–20, 25; Dwivedi 1984 (see NŚA), preface 83–90, text 32–34.

²² The deities identified as the manifestation of will, knowledge, and action are: according to the Trika tradition, Parā, Parāparā and Aparā; according to the Śrīvidyā tradition, Kāmeśvarī, Vajreśvarī and Bhagamālīnī; and according to the Durgā tradition, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī.

The mantras of the Tripurā tradition synthesize the triadic emergence of deities. The fifteen-syllable mantras of Tripurā,²³ segmented into three *kūṭa*-s (each comprised of a seed syllable and several other letters), are projected into three parts of the body, the navel center, the heart region, and the area of the eyebrows, representing the three energies of fire, sun, and moon. These centers also invoke multiple levels of meaning: the triad of subject, cognition and object, the triad in which consciousness manifests outward as objects, and the centers as the three seats of Kuṇḍalinī. As mantras are segmented into three, so also are the *maṇḍala*-s visualized in three physical planes.

Mantra recitation corresponds to the visualization of its syllables in six *cakra*-s in the body of the practitioner. The mantra in its unmanifest form rests in the deeper structures beyond the drop (*bindu*), generally visualized while repeating the seed mantra. The components of the seed syllable *hrīm* are *h* + *r* + *ī* + *m* (considered as *bindu*), and the stages above the drop are *ardhacandra* (half-moon), *nīrodhikā* (stopping power), *nāda* (sound), *nādānta* (the culmination of *nāda*), *śakti* (the state of potency), *vyāpinī* (all-pervading), *samanā* (that which incorporates the mind), and *unmanā* (beyond mind). *Japa* is not merely the repetition of the phonemes, but also the visualization of these deeper layers, located in vertical order above the eyebrow *cakra* (*ājñā*). This visualization serves to transform the practitioner's consciousness into divine awareness.

After visualization of the various *cakra*-s within his body, the practitioner contemplates both the body of the deity and the *maṇḍala*, followed in sequence by concentration upon six voids within the body; five states of consciousness, namely waking, dreaming, deep sleep, transcendent, and that which is beyond it; and seven *viśvas*.²⁴ With the ever-increasing complexity of these visualizations, mantra recitation emerges as a pure yogic practice of concentration and inwardness of mind, rising from the ground in which it is identified with objects. *Yoginīhṛdaya* (YH) prescribes the visualization of six voids

²³ There are several orders in which fifteen-syllable mantras of the goddess are composed. The most common sets are considered the *Kādi* which begins with *k*-syllable: *k-e-ī-l-hrīm-h-s-k-h-l-hrīm-s-k-l-hrīm*, and *Hādi*, which begins with *h*-syllable: *h-s-k-l-hrīm-h-s-k-h-l-hrīm-s-k-l-hrīm*.

²⁴ *śūmyaṣaṭkaṃ tathā devī hy avasthāpañcakaṃ punaḥ/*
viśvaṃ saptaṛūpaṃ ca bhāvaṃ manasā jayet/ YH 3.176–177.

in six positions found in twelve stages manifest within the seed mantra, *hṛīm*, and located in the positions of *r*, *bindu*, *rodhinī*, *nādānta*, *vyāpikā* (or *vyāpinī*) and *unmanā*. These voids are visualized in succession, like circles in a peacock feather, while the sixth void focused upon is formless. These six voids represent the inner objects of the senses including mind, and dissolution of these voids into the formless state leads the mind to its foundation.²⁵

According to the Tantras, the purpose of mantra practice is to bring *citta* (mind) to rest in its true nature, *cit* (awareness). As Kṣemarāja writes, this very awareness (*citi*) is *citta*, inasmuch as it becomes contracted in conformity with objects of consciousness.²⁶ Self-awareness is immanent, enfolded in the form of the mind, and the practice of mantra unfolds its glorious form of all-pervasive, pure awareness. While in its individuated form, consciousness is experienced in the states of waking, dreaming, and deep-sleep. Even though there is no objective awareness in the fourth, or the transcendent state, the very self-awareness is itself witnessed. This witnessing awareness not only verifies the non-being of other mental modes, it also indirectly proves the middle ground of conceptions.²⁷ Tantra identifies one further state of consciousness, which is identical to self-awareness and is of the nature of bliss. As this state is beyond the transcendental fourth state, it is called *turyātīta*. This non-dual state envelops all other cognitive modes and is considered to be beyond mind and speech.²⁸ Sense organs are active in the waking state, while the mind is active in dreaming.²⁹ There are no objects in dreamless sleep; however, this

²⁵ Visualization of six voids follows the *Vijñānabhairava* (VB) instruction:

*śikhipakṣaiś citrarūpair maṇḍalaiḥ śūnyapañcakam/
dhyāyato 'nuttare śūnye param vyomatanur bhavet//* VB 32.

²⁶ *Cūṭir eva cetanapadād avarūdhā cetyasaṅkocinī cittam* PH 5.

²⁷ See ŚS 1.7–11 for the Trika Śaiva interpretation of the four stages of consciousness.

²⁸ *Mālinīvijayottara* considers *Turyātīta* as the supreme state. (MVT 2.38). Abhinavagupta considers *turyātīta* as the fifth state. (*Tantrāloka* 10.238). He defines this state as: *yat tu pūrṇānavacchinnavapur ānandanirbharam/turyātītam tu tat prāhus tadeva paramaṃ padam //* (*Tantrāloka* 10.278). *Yat tv advaitabharollāsadvāvitāśeṣabhedakam/turyātītam tu tat prāhur itthaṃ sarvatra yojayet* (*Tantrāloka* 10. 297). *Ekatrāpi prabhau pūrṇe cit turyātītam ucyate* (*Tantrāloka* 10.299). YH mentions five states (*avasthāpañcaka* YH 3.176); this is considered the *turyātīta* in both the Dīpikā and Setubandha commentaries. YH 3.282 explicitly mentions this fifth state as *turyātīta*. Vidyānanda explains this state as: *Manovāgātītaturyātītasambhunā samarasadaśām . . .* Artharatnāvalī in NṢA, 1.9.

²⁹ The term 'mind' refers to *citta*, which is comprised of *manas*, *buddhi*, and *aṃkāra*, whose functions are reflection, cognition, and I-sense.

very absence is what is cognized in this state, and this awareness of absence confirms the existence of deep sleep. This mode of consciousness is visualized as the drop (*bindu*) in a mantra. The two further stages are recognized as inner structures of awareness in which either the self is manifest in its own form, or if the entities are cognized, they are cognized as the very nature of consciousness in reality. With this meditation, the individual endeavors to transcend the individuality residing in the body and mind; this results in his ability to perceive as a witness, to freely roam the different mental states without being engaged.

Visualization of the Viṣuva-s

Viṣuva means an equinox. Here, this refers to ‘the middle ground’ or ‘a union’ of the mind with particular aspects of a mantra. Recitation of a mantra corresponds to concentration upon certain middle grounds, along with reflection upon their manifold meanings. YH, a primary text in the Śrividya tradition, enjoins meditation upon seven *viṣuva-s* as a part of mantra recitation:

Prāṇaviṣuva: The visualization of the union of the life-force (*prāṇa*) and mind is the meditation called *prāṇaviṣuva*.³⁰ Yogic texts and Tantras stress the interrelationship between the mind and life-force, and in order to control the mind, the texts prescribe breath control. This visualization upon *prāṇaviṣuva*, however, differs from the conventional notion of controlling breath in the sense that the practice does not emphasize physical control, but instead, a merging of the identity of the life-force and mind. This *viṣuva* is meditated upon with particular focus on the rise of *prāṇa*. Unlike the *haṭha*, or exertive type of yoga, this type of practice is characterized as *sahaja*, or innate. In such a practice the Tantric yogin does not seek to control his

³⁰ YH defines *prāṇaviṣuva* as *yogaḥ prāṇātmamanasām viṣuvam prāṇasarijñitam*/YH 3.182. Amṛtānanda explains this as the union of the life force and mind. Bhāskararāya describes it as the sound that manifests when *Kuṇḍalinī* merges with the life force in the base *cakra*. This very sound joins the breath and mind while rising to the navel; upon reaching the heart, it unites with the breath and intellect. This meditation of the sound being united with mind and intellect in three centers is identified as *prāṇaviṣuva*. *Setubandha* in YH 3.182.

breath but rather to be transformed by means of attentive focus on its natural rhythms.

Mantraviśuwa: This is the visualization of the middle ground in which mind is dissolved into the sound rising from the base *cakra*. Here, *nāda* is the core of the mantra being practiced. Along with visualization upon each syllable of the mantra, the practitioner focuses upon the singular sound that envelops all the letters of the mantra; this process is called conjunction (*saṃyoga*) and disjunction (*viyoga*). In the process of conjunction, the practitioner envisions how all the phonemes merge into a singular sound, whereas in the process of disjunction, he observes the syllables of the mantra emerging from that same sound. In this practice, the heart itself is identified as the ultimate source for this cyclic dissolution and re-emergence of divine sound.³¹ The power that undergirds mantras is that which connects all its letters, the *nāda* which in itself is *kuṇḍalinī*. Tantras view mantras as being charged with power by means of their identification with *kuṇḍalinī*.

A yogin visualizes *nāda* while meditating upon the seed syllable into which the mantra dissolves. *Nāda* is metaphorically comparable to the thread upon which all beads are strung, the letters of the mantra being the beads. In this process, the yogin visualizes a dissolution of the first syllables, or *kūṭa*-s, into subsequent syllables, finally culminating in the fundamental, monosyllabic mantra specific to each practice.³² Then the *nāda* into which the individual self (*jīva*) merges is visualized as rising from the heart up to the cranial vault.³³ This

³¹ Amṛtānanda understands the heart *cakra* as being the center where the sound of the mantra is dissolved, while considering *anāhata*, or the heart, as *brahmarandhra*. Bhāskaraṛāya gives his different understanding in which the practice of meditation upon the middle ground of mantras (*mantraviśuwa*) occurs with the rise of Kuṇḍalinī, having recognized Kuṇḍalinī and the mantra as one.

³² Abhinavagupta identifies *Māṭṣadhbhāva* and *Bhairavasadbhāva* as two different seed-syllables in which the mantras of the goddesses and of the Bhairavas are dissolved. The *aim* syllable, having been recognized as *yonī*, is considered to be the fundamental seed-mantra of Kālī-kula in the northern transmission. The Tripuṣā tradition considers *hrīm* as the seed-mantra. In the Trika tradition, the Parā-Mantra, *saum* is considered the seed syllable in which the deities of the sect dissolve, and from which the deities emerge. These are considered to be the *praṇava*-s of the specific deities.

³³ The textual support Amṛtānanda relies upon locates visualization of the *nāda* in the region from the heart to the cranial vault: *hṛdayādi bilāntaṃ ca viśuvam mantrasaijñakam* (Quoted by Amṛtānanda in *Dīpikā*, YH 3.183–85). This resembles

ascent is performed in two ways: a) *kuṇḍalinī*, located in the base cakra, is invoked and dissolved in the heart, which in itself is *brahmarandhra*, and b) the visualization is commenced in the heart and culminated in the cranial vault, with *brahmarandhra* then understood as located atop the head.

Nāḍīviśuwa: The practice of the *nāḍīviśuwa* is the identification of *nāda* (sound) with *nāḍī*-s (channels). While pronouncing a mantra, the sound that is the foundation of all phonemes is attentively observed. When all the letters merge into the sound of the seed mantra, that *nāda* is visualized within the central channel (*suṣumṇā*) as penetrating all twelve knots while transcending the six *cakra*-s. The visualization of *nāḍīviśuwa* culminates when a yogin feels a touch (*sparsā*) of the quivering sound rising from the base *cakra* through the *suṣumṇā*.

Prasāntaviśuwa: Through the meditation known as *prasāntaviśuwa*, the stages of *bindu*, *ardhacandra*, *nīrodhinī*, *nāda*, and *nāḍānta* are dissolved into the *śakti*-state. Considered *nādayoga* and called *prasānta* (absolutely peaceful), the deeper stages of sound are visualized here, with all mental activities resting upon the *śakti* state.

Śaktiviśuwa: The *nāda* thus dissolved into *śakti* continues its ascent, crossing the *vyāpīnī* stage and dissolving into *samanā*. This is actually an extension of *prasāntaviśuwa*.

Kālavīśuwa: In the next stage of the process, the yogin visualizes *nāda* as transcending time. In preparing the mind for this meditation, subtle units of time are contemplated. Meditation of *Kālavīśuwa* makes the mind of the yogin skillful in visualizing these minute measurements of time as subtle as the 10,817 time-units called *tuṭi*-s, seen while pronouncing the single seed-mantra, *hrīm*.³⁴ In this *Kālavīśuwa* meditation, the mind dissolves into *unmanā*, the state in which the mind does not function.

the source Bhāskara-rāya is quoting: *hṛdayād brahmarandhrāntaṃ viśuwan mantrasaṃjñakam* (Quoted in Setubandha, YH 3.183–85).

³⁴ The duration of time for one eye-blink is defined as *nimeṣa*. A one-thirtieth part of *nimeṣa* is considered as *taṭpara* and a 100th-part of *taṭpara* is considered as *tuṭi*.

Tattvaviṣuva: This meditation upon one's own self after the *nāda* dissolves above *unmanā* reveals the true nature of the self, and visualization of this *viṣuva*, therefore, results in self-realization. It manifests the highest state transcending all six voids, five mental states, and the seven *viṣuva*-s. In this, all aspects of bliss found in sensory pleasure are collectively experienced.³⁵ This is the state in which there is no object to visualize while the self is immediately cognized. Thus, to rest upon the true nature of the self is the visualization of *Tattvaviṣuva*.

In the course of the aforementioned visualization, a yogin experiences degrees of liberation. Only the self as recognized in the *tattva-viṣuva* state is truly known, the other states being inferior, with impermanent liberation. These gradual experiences are preconditions of liberation, and only the yogin who perseveres in the quest for higher experience can achieve Śiva-hood.³⁶

Six-fold Meaning of a Mantra

Reflection upon the various layers of meanings in a single mantra is as ancient as the Indian mantra tradition itself. Yāska, the first etymologist, endeavored to apprehend multiple meanings in a single mantra. Tantra extends this concept. The significance of meaning in Tantric ritual and practice is fully manifested in the Śrīvidyā tradition, one of the most complex Śākta practices. There are two fundamental sources:

- a) *Yoginīhr̥daya* (YH) gives six levels of meaning to the mantra comprising 15 syllables. Two commentators upon the text, Amṛtānanda and Bhāskaraṛāya decipher mantras different from YH.

³⁵ Amṛtānanda defines the bliss experienced in this state as: *sarvaviṣayānanda-samaṣṭibhūtaḥ paramānando nisargānandaḥ* (*nisargānanda* is the supreme bliss which is the collection of bliss [experienced while enjoying] all objects). YH, *Dīpikā* 3.189.

³⁶ The verse, *piṇḍe muktāḥ pade muktā rūpe muktāḥ ṣaḍānana/rūpātīte tu ye muktās te muktā nātra saṁśayaḥ* / (quoted as 'statement of an authority' in YH *Dīpikā* 3.137–38), explains that liberation, while possible in the stages of *piṇḍa* and so forth, is not the real one. A verse explains the technical terms used in this passage:

piṇḍam kuṇḍalinī śaktiḥ padaṁ haṁsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ / rūpaṁ binduḥ samākhyāto rūpātītan tu niṣkalam / (Quoted in NŚA, *Artharatnāvalī*, 1.10; YH *Dīpikā* 1.43; YH *Setubandha* 1.41). Here, the term *piṇḍa* refers to *kuṇḍalinī*, the term *pada* refers to the life-breath, *rūpa* refers to the *bindu*, and the term *rūpātīta* refers to that which is beyond *kalā*-s.

- b) Bhāskararāya elaborates on this notion of multiple meanings in his independent text, *Varivasyārahasya*, where he excavates a sixteen-fold meaning within the fifteen-letter-mantra.

Elaboration upon the multivalent meaning of a mantra in this tradition is applicable for understanding other mantras as well. Since YH is considered to be an Āgamic text acceptable to all Śākta traditions, we expand upon the meaning contained within this text. The six layers of meanings within a mantra are *bhāvārtha*, *sampradāyārtha*, *nigarbhartha*, *kaulikārtha*, *sarvarahasyārtha*, and *mahātattoārtha*.³⁷

Bhāvārtha: The syllables comprising a mantra signify its essential meaning (*bhāvārtha*). All the gods and goddesses of the triad, the deities beyond the triad, and the supreme Śiva and Śakti constitute a mantra, or in other words, these are innate to a mantra.³⁸ These manifold deities are considered to be the limbs of the letters *a* and *h*, which are themselves the deities collectively constituting *aham* (I-ness).³⁹ In the context of the Śrīvidyā tradition, these deities comprise the mantra of 15 syllables which are segmented into three *kūṭa*-s. Tripurasundarī, the supreme deity residing in the center of the mantra, is the collection of all these deities. These deities are, in essence, the meaning of a mantra.⁴⁰

In Śrīvidyā, the three aspects of creation, sustenance, and contraction are represented in the three *kūṭa*-s of the mantra. As the world is manifest from the union of Śiva and Śakti, so are the mantras composed of the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, of which vowels and consonants are respectively considered as Śiva and Śakti. Thus, *bhāvārtha* reveals the relationship between the letters of the mantra and the deities.⁴¹

³⁷ YH 2. 15–16.

³⁸ These deities are called *Yoginī*-s, *Vīra*-s, *Vīrendra*-s, *Śiva* and *Śakti*. By the term *Yoginī* and *Vīra*, the deities of the triad of creation, sustenance, and contraction and their consorts (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra with Bhārati, Pṛthvī and Rudrānī) are identified. These deities signify the triad of will, knowledge, and action, in turn signifying *Vāmā*, *Jyēṣṭhā*, and *Raudrī*. *Vīrendra*-s are the deities beyond the triad, *Śāntā* and *Ambikā*.

³⁹ For further treatment on *Aham*, see Muller-Ortega 1989, 158–161.

⁴⁰ Bhāskararāya derives the mantra of 15 syllables from the deities counted in this group. He gives an alternative understanding by stating that this group of deities can signify only the first *Kūṭa* of the mantra: *tathā cāyam ślokaḥ prathamakūṭamā-trasyārthapratipādanaparaḥ*. *Setubandha* in YH 2.17.

⁴¹ Bhāskararāya derives three types of *bhāvārtha*: *evaṃ triprakāro bhāvārtho varṇitaḥ* (*Setubandha* in YH 2.24–25).

The Śrīvidyā mantra, comprising fifteen syllables, is considered to have nine sound levels (*nāda-s*) that represents the nine-fold cycle within the Śrīcakra. This signifies the five gross elements—earth, water, fire, air, and sky—along with the five subtle elements of smell, taste, form, touch, and sound. The letters of the mantra also represent the fifteen Nityās, deities who, in turn, correspond to the fifteen phases of the moon. Tripurasundarī, the central deity, is considered to be the sixteenth digit, the changeless aspect which is the foundation of all fifteen phases, and into which they merge.

In the highest understanding, awareness-in-itself is the essential meaning of a mantra. With visualization of the deities in the triad and those transcending the triad, what is meditated upon is the very awareness from which the world emerges. Therefore, the very self of the practitioner is the true nature or the heart of the mantras, and thus mantra recitation corresponds to self-realization. Experienced as *aham* (I-sense), this self-awareness is visualized in the letters of the mantra, while the *a* and *h* letters comprising *aham* are *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, consciousness and self-referentiality. Mantra practice transforms this I-sense from personal identity to unbound Śiva-awareness. Meditation upon the essential meaning of a mantra is to experience the *parātīta* state, the state that is beyond the transcendental or fourth state, in which all is one in the single seed mantra of the goddess.

Sampradāyārtha ('the meaning given in a lineage'): *Sampradāya* identifies the community for whom knowledge is imparted in a proper sequence, to the aspirant deemed worthy and sufficiently prepared, and to the lineage-meaning concealed within an adept of the tradition. At this level of meditation, the aspirant relates the mantra to the five elements; for instance, in the case of the Tripurā-Mantra, the five letters, *h*, *k*, *r*, *s*, and *l* align with sky, air, fire, water, and earth. From these letters emerge fifteen qualities, with different proportions of sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. This visualization generates the awareness that the mantra envelops all that exists; recitation occurs with this understanding of its all-pervasiveness. The powers intrinsic to all entities, whether sentient or not, are considered to be aspects of Śakti, corresponding to the letter *h* in the mantra, while the entities themselves are Śiva, latent in the *a* letter; self-awareness does not negate the world, but rather rests in the realization of immanence. For instance, in fire, there is heat; in water, there is taste; in a person, there is consciousness; in the moon, there is a halo: in all

the entities that exist in the world, Śakti is hidden. Recitation of a mantra is the reflection upon the meaning that allows the practitioner to receive knowledge of Śakti, who permeates all that exists. This all-pervasiveness intrinsic to the mantra is meditated upon by linking the 36 categories (*tattva*-s) to the letters of the mantra, while the sound that grounds and transcends all the letters is considered as the 37th category.⁴² Thus the recitation of a mantra is the realization that the mantra being practiced is identical with all the categories.

The mantra, besides signifying the world objectively cognized, also indicates different stages of subjective awareness. The impure awareness (*sakala*) is common to all individuals limited in their will, knowledge, and action, and who are bound in the world perceiving duality. A 'mixed' (*miśra*) subjective awareness characterizes the *pralayākala* level of beings who are unbound by *karma*, having a limitation of knowledge and will. At the *Vijñānākala* level are those beings who have attained true knowledge and are freed from their *karma*, while still having limitation in will. With the visualization of these different degrees of individualities, the yogin endeavors to achieve the Śiva-awareness that envelops all these identities.⁴³ These three levels of awareness are visualized in a mantra (in the context of YH, the 15-letter-Tripurasundarī-Mantra) with the first referring to *prāṇa*, or life force, the second, to *jīva* or soul, while the third, to Śiva-awareness. With this meditation, the common-sense experience at the *prāṇa* level rises to Śiva-awareness, permeating all subjective and objective identities.

⁴² Śaiva traditions, specifically the Trika Śaiva doctrine, favors 36 categories beginning from Śiva, the supreme category. The twenty-five Sāṃkhya categories are identical. Placed above these, the Śaiva tradition adds the limiting factors *māyā*, *avidyā*, *kalā*, *rāga*, *kāla*, *niyatī*, and above that, the pure categories found below Śiva are *Śakti*, *Sadāśiva*, *Īśvara* and *Śuddhavidyā*. The 37th category, recognized in some Tantras as Paramaśiva, is addressed as Sadbhāva or Bhairava, the state of *Viśvottīṣṇa-Viśvamayātā*. Abhinavagupta analyzes these categories in Ch. 11 of *Tantrāloka*.

⁴³ Bhāskararāya interprets the *pramāṭṛ*-s, or cognizing subjects, in two different ways. The first resembles that explained by Amṛtānanda, where three categories of subjective awareness refer to *sakala*, *pralayākala*, and *vijñānākala*. According to the second interpretation, the first level of cognizing subject refers to impure Siddha-s, 118 in number, such as Krodhabhaṭṭāraka. The second level refers to the pure-impure subjects, recognized as *lokapāla*-s, namely Agni, Indra, and so forth. The *vidyeśvara*-s are considered to be the *śuddha-pramāṭṛ*-s (pure subjective-awareness), the third, or the highest level of cognizing subjects. However, those pure deities whose darkness (*kaluṣa*) has not ended are recognized as the seventy million mantras.

Mantras are comprised of drop (*bindu*) and sound (*nāda*). While the *bindu* aspect gives rise to the triad of male deities, the triad of goddesses is the manifestation of *nāda*.⁴⁴ In the context of *Śrīvidyā*, these triads are visualized in three *kūṭa*-s. The first of the *nāda* aspects, *śāntī*, is contemplated in the form of unmanifest-sound dissolved in the cranial vault, that has risen from the *Śakti* position in the base cakra to rest in the *Śakti* position atop the thousand-petalled lotus. *Śakti* is identical with *Kuṇḍalinī* who rises, piercing three knots in the positions where the aspects of fire, sun, and moon are meditated upon.⁴⁵ This is visualized beyond *rodhinī*, the power that hinders the unqualified yogin from higher awareness. *Śambhu* is considered to be the supreme void, the void of consciousness that is beyond name and form, that transcends the identities made of subject and object: this is the true nature of awareness.

The fundamental mantra of the deity that is visualized at the center of the *maṇḍala* permeates all the deities residing in the *maṇḍala*, in the sense that they are her own manifestations. The mantra of the central deity is the origin of all the mantras of the deities around her: all other mantras pertaining to the peripheral deities emanate from the central mantra. The central mantra is the foundation of knowledge, and so with the perfection of this mantra, the practitioner also acquires perfection in the gnosis that flows in the *Kula*. The knowledge that is acquired through the central mantra permeates all other levels of realization that manifest particular aspects of the Śiva-nature, granting perfections of a limited nature.

Nigarbhārtha: The most esoteric (*nigarbha*)⁴⁶ meaning is the identification of the deity, the master, and the aspirant as one and the same. The master is considered to be Śiva in the sense that he imparts the knowledge revealed by Śiva himself and manifest in the form of Āga-

⁴⁴ In this particular context, the deities visualized as an aspect of *bindu* are Rudra, Īśvara and Sadāśiva, and the deities seen as an aspect of *nāda* are Śāntī, Śakti and Śambhu. Śambhu, even though not a goddess, is read in the list of *nāda* deities. The wisdom goddesses and gods visualized in the group of Śambhu or Śāmbhavī are of the *Yāmala* nature. It is explicit in six Śāmbhava visualizations, in which 360 rays are installed in six cakra-s pertaining to six Śambhu and Śāmbhavī deities of which half are male and the rest female.

⁴⁵ These knots or *granthi*-s are identified as *Brahmagranthi*, *Viṣṇugranthi* and *Rudragranthi*.

⁴⁶ *Nītarāṇi garbha eva nigarbho rahasyatama ityarthah Setubandha* in YH 2.48.

mas. In Tantras, the position of the master is very high, as he is the one who connects the self bound in the world to the all-pervasive consciousness.

Kaulikārtha: Found with the *Kula*, the clan of initiates, this meaning is grasped with the realization of the identity of the Maṇḍala, the deity, the mantra, the master who has imparted knowledge, and the individual self practicing the mantra. This, therefore, is an extended form of the *nigarbha* practice. The self-awareness a yogin acquires through mantra practice does not negate his surroundings, but rather reflects the higher realization in which he identifies his surroundings with himself and with the deity meditated upon at the center of the *maṇḍala*. ‘*Kula*’ fundamentally refers to the two aspects of body and the world comprised of 36 categories. The meaning channeled within the clan coalesces these two meanings into one, with the body visualized as an aggregate of all 36 categories.

The mantra and *maṇḍala* are identified as equivalent: this is explicit in the case of Śrīvidyā practice. The syllable ‘*l*’ signifies a square and three circles, the syllable ‘*ṣ*’ signifies two circles constructed of the sixteen- and eight-petalled lotuses. Three seed mantras in three *kūṭa*-s comprise the *navayoni cakra*, the central triangle, the eight triangles, and the central drop found in the innermost layers of Śrī-cakra. The triad of seed syllables refer to the three aspects of will, knowledge, and action. While chanting the Śrī-mantra, the three triangles facing up and down that constitute three layers of the *maṇḍala*—two layers of ten triangles and one of fourteen triangles—are visualized when articulating the letter ‘*h*’. While meditating upon the *maṇḍala*, the triangles facing up represent the ‘fire’ aspects while the triangles facing down signify ‘water’. This identification of a particular letter with a particular layer of the *maṇḍala* suggests that the visualization of the *maṇḍala* coincides with the chanting of the mantra. The *maṇḍala* is a photic representation of the phonematic mantra. The letters that signify particular layers of the mandala differ with each practice. In the practice of Śrīvidyā, the aspirant articulates the syllable ‘*k*’ while meditating upon Sadāśiva, a *preta* reclining atop four other deities representing four aspects of *krama*.⁴⁷ In the drop (*bindu*), Śiva is visualized.

⁴⁷ The *Krama* doctrine analyzes the manifestation of the supreme reality in five

With the visualization of will, knowledge, and action in the weapons a deity holds a noose, a hook, a bow and five arrows—in the context of *Śrīvidyā*, with visualization of a noose (*pāśa*) as will, a hook (*aṅkuśa*) as knowledge, and a bow and arrows as action—the deity is identified as an embodiment of all forces manifest in these weapons. While reflecting upon the *kaulika* meaning, in the same way as the mantra and *maṇḍala* are recognized as identical, so are the mantra and the deity. The meaning of a mantra is found in the recognition of correspondence between the anthropomorphic form of the deity with the geometric *maṇḍala*. All the deities that reside in different parts of the *maṇḍala* are emanations of the central deity. Similarly with the *maṇḍala*, all the geometric forms that comprise it concentrate into the very drop at the center, and unfold again into radiant form. The deity that resides within and the *maṇḍala* are meditated upon as identical. Furthermore the different deities residing in different parts of the *maṇḍala* are viewed as the limbs of the central deity. The weapons of the primary deity give rise to the first external layers of the *maṇḍala*. For instance, in the case of *Śrīvidyā*, the weapons of the goddess Tripurā and lord Kāmeśvara are envisioned as the eight triangles in the external layer of the innermost triangle of the *maṇḍala*.

The deities, planets, and lunar mansions (*nakṣatra*-s) installed in the practitioner's body during the course of six-fold-*nyāsa* are visualized as part of the *kaulika* meaning.⁴⁸ In this meditation, the immanence of the goddess is recognized in her cosmic representation, where the central deity is not only the center of the *maṇḍala*, but also the center of the universe. Six mother-goddesses meditated upon in the center of six *cakra*-s are considered to be the six substances that comprise the body of the goddess, which, in the body of the practitioner, are located in the skin, nerves, flesh, fat, marrow, and semen.⁴⁹ With

successive grades of *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, *saṃhāra*, *anākhyā* and *bhāsa*. These primarily resemble the fivefold function of lord Śiva as *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, *saṃhāra*, *nigraha* and *anugraha*.

⁴⁸ *Gaṇeśa*, *Graha*, *Nakṣatra*, *Yoginī*, *Rāśi*, and *Pīṭha* are the components of six-fold-*nyāsa*. YH 2.8–44 elaborates upon this *nyāsa*. *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṃava* 1.1 praises the goddess, Tripurasundarī, as an embodiment of these six categories.

⁴⁹ These six *Yoginīs* are *Ḍākinī*, *Rākinī*, *Lākinī*, *Kākinī*, *Śākinī*, and *Hākinī*. Amṛtānanda considers *Yākinī* as the seventh *Yoginī*, but identifies only six physical substances (*dhātu*-s) corresponding to these deities. He again interprets the *Yoginī* as eight mothers. With an indication of *aṣṭāṣṭaka*, it appears that he also includes sixty-four *Yoginīs* as a part of visualization. (See *Dīpikā* in YH 2.61). In six-fold *nyāsa*, the Rudra deities that correspond to each of the Sanskrit syllables are suggested by *Gaṇeśa*. YH, however, embraces all the deities in *Śrī-cakra*, collectively 111 deities, with the term *Gaṇeśa*.

nine groups of letters, nine planets are visualized. As a part of *kaulika* meaning, the deities are considered to be parts of practitioner's body as well, a microcosmic form of the supreme. The letters segmented in twenty-seven groups referring to twenty-seven lunar mansions (*nakṣatra-s*) compose the visionary body of a yogin.⁵⁰ The twelve deities of the zodiac refer to the ten life forces (*prāṇa*),⁵¹ the individual self (*jīvātman*), and the supreme self (*paramātman*). With visualization of the fifty Śākta *pīṭha-s*, the practitioner, while chanting the mantra, realizes his immanence. This cosmic representation is visualized in the deity, the *maṇḍala*, and the mantra of the goddess. This meditation gives rise of *pūrṇāhantā* (complete I-ness). *Ĵapa*, in this sense, is an extension of subjective awareness in the divine form that envelops all entities of existence.

Sarvarahasyārtha: The most esoteric (*sarvarahasya*) meaning of a mantra is its identification with *Kuṇḍalinī*. A mantra is visualized as originating in the base cakra, rising above in the form of *Kuṇḍalinī*, piercing the centers where aspects of fire, sun, and moon are visualized. A triangle, at the base of the lotus identical with this *cakra*, is considered as the collection of all the categories, including fifty Sanskrit syllables. All four levels of speech are contemplated in this triangle, including three aspects of consciousness manifest in the form of subject, object, and cognition. Meditation upon the aspects that manifest as digits of the five mantras and correspond to the five faces of Lord Śiva reflect upon this very triad in which fire is visualized with

⁵⁰ When identifying the body with the cosmos, it is analyzed in twenty-seven parts. These limbs are the ten senses and ten sense-objects, with *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta*, *ahaṅkāra*, *prakṛti*, *guṇa* and *puruṣa*. Among these, the categories *manas* to *puruṣa* appear similar to those of Sāṃkhya (see Larson 1969, 7–14). However, Sāṃkhya does not distinguish *citta* from the triad of *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṅkāra*. Furthermore, this list identifies *guṇa* as a category distinct from *prakṛti*, while according to Sāṃkhya, *prakṛti* is the collective form of the *guṇa-s* in equilibrium (see Larson 1969, 37–39; 162–64). A body is, according to Sāṃkhya and Tantra, comprised of these categories and sense organs. Tantras, in addition, stress that these bodily components correspond to twenty-seven lunar mansions (*nakṣatra-s*). In the Hindu calendar, the zodiac is divided into twenty-seven lunar mansions corresponding to lunar days, of which twelve are identified by the month-names. These mansions actually are clusters of stars. Having stressed the relationship of the limbs of the body with these clusters, Tantras establish the identity of body and cosmos for meditative purposes. Here, mantra is used as a tool to reflect upon this identification of the physical limbs with stars in various clusters.

⁵¹ *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna*, *nāga*, *kūrma*, *kṛkālā*, *devadatta*, and *dhananījaya* are the names of the life-force that functions in different parts of the body.

ten digits, the sun with twelve aspects, and the moon with sixteen phases. This number coincides with the Rudras present in the five mantras representing five faces of Śiva, and permeates the thirty-six Tantric categories and that which is beyond them.

Mahātattvārtha: This is the highest meaning of a mantra, subtly suggested in the texts on *Mahārtha*, grounded on Kālīkula.⁵² Realization of *mahārtha* is the practitioner's identification with divine awareness, recognizing the world as his very own aspects.⁵³ With realization of *mahārtha*, a yogin abiding in this state of transcendent awareness is eternally free from the manifold appearance in the world, yet fully aware of the world as his own nature. Thus, a yogin in this state experiences both liberation and the world, enjoying bliss in its true form and also its objective manifestations, realizing that instances of awareness are merely waves upon the ocean, inseparable from their origin. This reality is not marred by the distinction of dark and light; there is no separation of time and space; in this awareness, the yogin transcends the duality of consciousness and matter.

Conclusion

This discussion reveals that, in Tantra, articulating a mantra is a demanding form of meditation, with an increasingly complex inner visualization and reflection upon meanings. Mantra practice envelops other forms of meditation within it, and adds further categories. An external verbalization of a mantra alone lacks the subtle forms of mantra-recitation that adorn the Tantras. The spiraling, inner visualization and contemplation renders Tantric meditation impenetrable and therefore secret.

⁵² Texts such as *Mahārthamañjarī* and *Mahānayaṣa*, alongside the texts of *Kālīkula*, primarily *Cūḍagānacandrikā* of Śrīvatsa or texts such as *Kālīkulakramapañcaśatikā*, are the major texts on Mahārtha. *Mahārthamañjarī* is comparatively closer to texts of the Śrīvidyā tradition.

⁵³ Maheśvarānanda cites YH 2.15–16 to support his understanding of *mahārtha*, and subsequently defines *mahārtha* as: *tattadaśeṣārthattattvavaicitryasamaṣṭyadhiṣṭhānarūpatayā mahān abhedaprabhedakroḍhikāravacakṣaṇo, 'rthaḥ prāpyaṃ tattvam*. (*Mahārthamañjarī*, Parimala 70). According to this, *mahārtha* is the non-dual principle that incorporates all the objective *arthas*.

With the term *japa* subsuming within itself all of the visualizations here articulated, the complete set of ritual is one single *japa* in different limbs. The six-fold *nyāsa*, the visualization of the feet of Guru, the *nyāsa* of the *maṇḍala* and deity and mantras installed within the practitioner's body, all are part of the same mantra being practiced, or the very meaning of the mantra itself. Since the meaning of the mantra lies in the totality of practices as well as being fully manifest in each and every component, its meaning cannot be limited to a linear understanding, nor can it be contracted to the singular meaning of a sentence. In other words, mantras are meaningful; however, their derivation of meaning differs from that of ordinary speech. This does not negate the elementary meaning—which can be the *bhāvārtha* of the mantra—but transcends it, signifying the totality, simultaneously referring to all aspects that the totality embraces. Mantra is a language with the signs and their meanings resting upon the conventions of each respective tradition. This can be arbitrary, or even imposed by certain exegetes; nonetheless, the meaning of a sign cannot be separated from the understanding of the sign-holders. Therefore, the meaning of a mantra is all of what is recognized as its meaning. This being the case, articulating a mantra is the realization that this totality lies in one's own heart.

This discussion also reveals that deciphering meaning and practicing mantra in the Tantric tradition embraces the categories of Yāska and Patañjali as its initial steps and develops further, not negating what is expressed but adding multiple understandings of its own. The result of this practice is the same in both Tantric and Yogic traditions: mantra practice culminates in self-awareness and the end of suffering.⁵⁴

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⁵⁴ *Tataḥ pratyakcetanādhigamo 'py antarāyābhāvaś ca* YS 1.29. With the six-fold meaning discussed from a Tantric perspective, self-awareness is the central meaning. Manifestation of Lordship, with all perfections that result from the awareness of immanence, also supports the concept that no hindrances impede a practitioner during the course of his meditation.

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THE *GURU-GĪTĀ* OR ‘SONG OF THE MASTER’
AS INCORPORATED IN THE *GURU-CARITRA* OF
SARASVATĪ GAṄGĀDHAR: OBSERVATIONS ON ITS
TEACHINGS AND THE *GURU* INSTITUTE

Antonio Rigopoulos

mānasa-bhajare guru-caraṇam /
dustara-bhava-sāgara-taraṇam //

Worship in thy mind the *guru*’s feet:
[these alone] carry over the ocean of existence, hard
to overcome!
(Satya Sāi Bābā’s first *bhajan*—Ūravākoṇḍa, 20
October 1940)

Abstract

This paper offers an overview of a particular version of a celebrated Sanskrit hymn (*stotra*), the *Guru-gītā*, as it was incorporated in the Marāṭhī *Guru-caritra* (circa 1550) of Sarasvatī Gaṅgādhara, the foundational text of the *Datta-sampradāya* in the Marāṭhī area celebrating the lives of the first two *avatāra*-s of Datta/Dattātreyā, Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha (circa 1323–53) and Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (circa 1378–1458). The paper presents the *Guru-gītā*’s articulation of the three ideal phases in the master-disciple relationship and highlights the context in which the hymn has been inserted towards the end of the *Guru-caritra*, in an effort to appreciate the rationale of such an appropriation. Some considerations on the *guru* institute, on the veritable worldly power and socio-political ‘weight’ of the *guru*, conclude the study.

My interest in the *Guru-gītā*—celebrated Sanskrit hymn (*stotra*) exalting the figure of the authoritative spiritual master, popular in the whole of the Indian subcontinent—was prompted by a study of the Marāṭhī *Guru-caritra* (‘The Deeds of the Master’), the foundational text of the *Datta-sampradāya* (‘The tradition [of the followers] of Datta/Dattātreyā’)¹ in the Marāṭhī cultural area, when I realized that in

¹ Presented in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* as well as in other *Purāṇa*-s as a partial descent of Viṣṇu, Dattātreyā became very popular in the Marāṭhī cultural area

some of its editions the work incorporates as its 49th chapter (*adhyāya*) a version of this eulogy of the master.

In Mahārāṣṭra, the advent of the modern *Datta-sampradāya* is traced back to two figures venerated as the first historical *avatāra*-s² of Dattātreyā: Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha (circa 1323–53) and Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (circa 1378–1458). This latter one was an ascetic belonging to the brāhmaṇical caste ordained in the *sarasvatī* branch of the *daśanāmī* renunciants. Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī was truly the founder of the tradition once he settled at Gāṇagāpūr³—where he spent the last twenty-three (or perhaps twenty-four) years of his life—a locale in the north of today's State of Karṇāṭaka (Afzālpūr *tāluk*, Gulbarga District) at the border with Mahārāṣṭra. The miraculous lives of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha and Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī, together with the places which they sanctified with their presence (especially Gāṇagāpūr, Narsobāvāḍī, and Audumbar: locales which have become important pilgrimage sites⁴ and where

where to this day he is revered as the paradigm of the eternal master (*guru*), the supreme renunciant (*yogin*, *avadhūta*), and the full manifestation (*pūrṇa-avatāra*) of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva in one. On the elusive yet fascinating figure of Dattātreyā, see my monograph *Dattātreyā: The Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra. A Study of the Transformative and Inclusive Character of a Multi-Faceted Hindu Deity* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998). On the *Datta-sampradāya*, see R. C. Ḍhere, *Datta Sampradāyācā Itihās* (Pune: Nilakanth Prakāśan, 1964). For a beautiful, short poem eulogizing Dattātreyā in *kāvya* style—written by one of his allegedly oldest devotees—see Dalādanamuni, *Dattalaharī. L'onda di Datta*. A cura di Antonio Rigopoulos (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 1999).

² The peculiar belief in the manifestation of *avatāra*-s of an *avatāra* is not unusual. It is actually institutionalized in the *guru-paramparā* or uninterrupted 'succession of masters' of the *Datta-sampradāya*. Dattātreyā, being magnified as eternal *avatāra*, is believed to manifest himself from time to time under a variety of different guises (natural and animal, as well as human). Having the 'sight' (*darśana*) of Dattātreyā in his typical iconographic form, bearing three heads and six arms, or in the guise of one of his manifestations, as well as having the capacity or gift of being able to recognize him, are considered to be a rare privilege. As a Marāṭhī saying goes: 'To appear all of a sudden like Datta' (*datta mhaṇūna ubhā rahāṇem*), it is commonly believed that he may manifest all of a sudden and in unpredictable ways and circumstances. On the other hand, he is believed to be always present everywhere, albeit in an invisible form. On the notion of *avatāra*, tightly linked to the institute of sacred kingship, see M. Biarreau, 'Études de mythologie hindoue IV,' in *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, tome LXIII, Paris (1976): 111–200.

³ For a presentation of Gāṇagāpūr, also known as Gandharvapūr and Gāṇagābhavana, certainly the most important pilgrimage center of the *Datta-sampradāya*, see M. S. Mate, *Temples and Legends of Maharashtra* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1988 [1st ed. 1962]), 79–101.

⁴ On the practice of pilgrimage in the Marāṭhī area, a classic is the account of her going to Paṇḍharpur of I. Karve, "'On the Road": A Maharashtrian Pilgrimage,' in E. Zelliot – M. Berntsen (eds.), *The Experience of Hinduism. Essays on Religion in*

the wooden sandals or *nirguṇa-pādukā*-s⁵ of these masters are worshipped), are narrated in the *Guru-caritra* (circa 1550)⁶ of Sarasvatī Gaṅgādhar,⁷ a Marāṭhī hagiography in 51 *adhyāya*-s for a total of more than 7,000 *ovī*-s⁸ emphasizing brāhmaṇical ritual orthodoxy and venerated as a veritable 'Bible' by all devotees of Dattātreya. Tradition has it that Sarasvatī Gaṅgādhar belonged to a *śaiva* clan (*gotra*) going back to Kauṇḍinya and that he was a disciple of 4th generation of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī, in the line of Sāyaṃdev (direct

Maharashtra (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 142–171. See also D. B. Mokashi, *Palkhi: An Indian Pilgrimage* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987 [1st ed. 1964]).

⁵ The feet and sandals are *par excellence* the repository of the saint's *śakti*. Devotees are always eager to massage or even simply touch the feet of an ascetic or *guru*. Sandals, at the same time, are the emblem of royal dignity and spiritual authority, especially in a *vaiṣṇava* context. The *pādukā*-s are also the symbol of being constantly on the way. Dattātreya, as supreme ascetic, is the paradigm of *homo viator*: said to be omnipresent—although incognito—a popular belief has it that he bathes daily in the Gaṅgā in Kāśī (or, according to others, in Haridvār, or even in the Godāvarī near Pāñcāleśvara), begs his food at noon in Kolhāpur (the ancient Karvīr, important *śakti-pīṭha* dedicated to Mahālakṣmī), and finally reaches Mahur (the ancient Mātāpur, another important *śakti-pīṭha*) where he spends the night. It is also believed that Dattātreya meditates every day in the area of Gīrnār. The *Kulāmava Tantra* (12.12) solemnly proclaims that the supreme *pādukā*-mantra is *pādukām pūjyāmi*: 'I venerate the sandals [of the master]!' On the crucial importance of the veneration of feet and sandals, see H. Bakker, 'The Footprints of the Lord,' in D. L. Eck – F. Mallison (eds.), *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India. Studies in Honour of Charlotte Vaudeville* (Groningen – Paris: Egbert Forsten – École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991), 19–37. See also the recent monograph of J. Jain-Neubauer, *Feet & Footwear in Indian Culture* (Toronto, The Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, 2000).

⁶ A short presentation of the *Guru-caritra* is offered by S. G. Tulpule in his *Classical Marāṭhī Literature. From the Beginning to A.D. 1818* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979), 352–353. To this day, the most accurate edition of the text is the one by R. K. Kāmat (ed.), *Śṛīgurucaritra* (Mumbāi: Keśav Bhikājī Dhavḷe Prakāśan, 1990 [1st ed. 1937]). See also S. Sarasvatī (ed.), *Śṛīgurucaritra* (Indore: Dharmajñān Prakāśan, 2000). For a summary of the work, see D. D. Joshi, *Śrī Gurucaritra Kathāsār* (Pūṇe: Ādarś Vidyārthī Prakāśan, 1986). On the *Guru-caritra*, see also my *Dattātreya, op. cit.*, pp. 109–134.

⁷ He was the first to promote the ideal of a *Mahārāṣṭra-dharma*, prior to the time of the poet-saint Rāmdās (1608–1681). Curiously, Sarasvatī Gaṅgādhar's mother-tongue seems to have been Kannaḍa and not Marāṭhī.

⁸ The term *ovī* derives from the verb *ovaṇē* 'to interlace'. The *ovī* meter, which in its original form was recitable and singable, consists of six or eight syllables, the quantity of the syllable being usually long. Each syllable has the length of a musical time unit (*tāla-mātrā*). The origin of the *ovī* meter is to be traced to popular songs, as it is indicated by the following stanza: 'In Mahārāṣṭra, the *ovī* is sung while pounding [corn]' (*mahārāṣṭreṣu yoṣidbhiḥ ovī geyā tu kaṇḍane*).

disciple of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī), Nāgnāth (son of Sāyaṃdev, he also personally knew Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī), and Devrāv (son of Nāgnāth). The *Guru-caritra* is divided into three sections (*kāṇḍa*): *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (chapters 1–24), *karma-kāṇḍa* (chapters 25–37), and *bhakti-kāṇḍa* (chapters 38–51). Only the first *adhyāya*-s are dedicated to a presentation of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha's life, especially the 5th and the 9th, which ends with the description of his 'disappearance' at Kuravapur, on the banks of the Kṛṣṇā. The major part of the work, chapters 11 to 51, are devoted to the extraordinary life of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī, the great *guru* and founder of the *Datta-sampradāya*, a *brāhmaṇa* descendant of the Vājasaneyin branch, whose birthplace was Karañjā in the Akolā District of Mahārāṣṭra.⁹

To this day, these *adhyāya*-s are read by devotees as a powerful *mantra*, healing both physical as well as spiritual ailments. On the other hand, the *Guru-caritra* does not particularly excel as a literary work. It is the simple narration in the form of a dialogue between the *yogin* Siddhamuni (an ascetic having made vow of silence, a direct disciple of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī) and the pilgrim-devotee Nāmdhārak of the most relevant episodes—always emphasizing the miraculous—of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's life. The whole work is interspersed with stories clearly echoing major purāṇic themes and is repleted with sacred spells and *mantra*-s.¹⁰ Contrary to the more open and liberal outlook of the *Vārkarī-sampradāya* (the popular movement of the Marāṭhī poet-saints devoted to Viṭhala/Viṭhobā¹¹ of Paṇḍharpur).¹² the main objective of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī was clearly that of awakening brāhmaṇical orthodoxy, then in decline due to the Islāmic domination of the

⁹ For a presentation of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī as depicted in these chapters, see my *Dattātreya, op. cit.*, pp. 110–115. In the *Guru-caritra* the figure of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha—though being the first *avatāra* of Datta—is subordinated to that of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī: he is presented according to hagiographic patterns which are practically the same as the ones utilized to present the latter. Vājasaneyin is the name of the Upaniṣadic teacher Yājñavalkya, founder of the white (*śukla*) Yajurveda school.

¹⁰ On the origin and function of *mantra*-s in the religious traditions of India, see H. P. Alper (ed.), *Mantra* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹¹ On the sanctuary of Viṭhala/Viṭhobā in Paṇḍharpur, see the classic monograph of G. A. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā* (Poona: Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, 1960). On the all-important pilgrimage site of Paṇḍharpur, see Mate, *Temples and Legends of Maharashtra, op. cit.*, pp. 188–220.

¹² On the *Vārkarī* movement from the time of its founder Jñāndev onwards, see Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature, op. cit.*, pp. 329 ff.

Bahāmānī rulers (the *Guru-caritra* mentions more than once the Islāmic kingdom of Bīdar as well as that of other Deccan sultanates). This awakening of brāhmanism was implemented by insisting upon the observance of caste rules and regulations (*cāturvarṇya*)¹³ and the practice of sacrifices (*yajña*) and rituals, such as the ceremony in honor of the ancestors (*śrāddha*) or the initiation rite into the study of the four *Veda*-s (*mauñji-bandhana*). All this was meant to contrast and counter both Muslim rule as well as the excesses of Tantrism.

In more recent times, another important master in the tradition of the *Datta-sampradāya*, Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī (1854–1914, also known as Ṭembe Svāmin), took pains to translate the *Guru-caritra* into Sanskrit.¹⁴ During the 20th century, the *Guru-caritra* has been translated into various Indian languages and it has also been rendered into English.¹⁵

The *Guru-gītā* or 'Song of the Master' is a short Sanskrit poem of vedāntic, non-dual (*advaita*) inspiration, magnifying the figure of the spiritual master as the supreme Absolute (*brahman*), paradigm of devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). The *Guru-gītā* presents itself as a divine revelation, in the form of a dialogue between lord Śiva, the

¹³ For an introduction to the caste system, see L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980 [1st ed. 1966]). See also B. K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ This work, in two thousand verses, is known as *Dvi-sahasī* and was written in 1889 in the village of Māngāon, Mahārāṣṭra, when Vāsudevānanda was still a *grhastha*: according to tradition, he completed his *opus* in just twelve days. Another Sanskrit work of his based upon the *Guru-caritra* is the *Guru-saṃhitā* (lit. 'The "Collection" of the Master,' in nearly 6,500 *śloka*-s), also known as *Sama-śloki* being a stanza-for-stanza translation. This was composed in 1902 at Brahmavarta, near Kanpur, on the banks of the Ganges, in less than two months. On his writings, see Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī, *Datta-Purāṇa and Other Works, together with his Biography Gurudeva-caritra*, Puṇe, 1954. For a more detailed presentation of this important figure, see L. N. Jośī, *Śrīvāsudevānandasarasvatī (Ṭembesvāmīmahārāj)*. *Caritra va śikavaṇ* (Puṇe: Śrīgajānan Books, n.d.). See also my article 'Il *Dattāparādhakṣamāpanastotra* di Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī' in R. Perinu – V. Agostini (ed.), *Atti del decimo convegno nazionale di studi sanscriti* (Biella, 15 ottobre 1999) (Torino: Associazione italiana di studi sanscriti, 2003), 119–139.

¹⁵ For the English translation, see A. E. Bharadvaja (trans.), *Sree Guru Charitra*. By Gangadhar Saraswati (Ongole: Sai Baba Mission, 1985). For an English summary of the text, see B. R. Shenoy, *Sri Guru Charitra* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1994), and also K. V. R. Rao, *Guru Charitra* (Apta, Panvel: Shree Swami Samarth Vishwa Kalyan Kendra, 1995).

Benevolent, and his spouse Pārvatī.¹⁶ The fundamental question which she asks at the very beginning is how is it possible for the individual soul to attain union with the Absolute. Śiva answers by establishing an equivalence between *brahman* and the authoritative master, since ‘*brahman* is none other than the master’ (*guruṃ vinā brahma nānyat*). Typically, the *Guru-gītā* presents itself as part of the vast *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Sanat Kumāra-saṃhitā*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*) or, more rarely, of the *Padma Purāṇa* or even of the *Brahma Purāṇa*. Presenting itself also as a *Tantra*, the *Guru-gītā* is said to be part of the *Rudra-yāmala Tantra* as well as of the *Viśva-sāra Tantra*, and a collection of its verses can also be found in the *Kulārṇava Tantra* and other tantric sources.¹⁷ Inspired by the exemplary model of the *Bhagavad-gītā*—a frequent imitative phenomenon in purāṇic literature¹⁸—the *Guru-gītā* is in fact

¹⁶ For an overview of Śiva’s figure and mythology, see W. D. O’Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śaivism: A Comparison* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1976); C. Dimmitt – J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 147–218; S. Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). See also M. Piantelli’s introduction to his *Īśvaragītā o ‘Poema del Signore’*. Introduzione, traduzione e note di Mario Piantelli (Parma: Luigi Battei, 1980), 21–105. For a useful bibliography on Śaivism, see A. Pelissero, *Il riso e la pula. Vie di salvezza nello śvaismo del Kāśmīr* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1998), 163–178. On Pārvatī and her indissoluble link with Śiva, see D. R. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses. Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), ch. 3, 35–54.

¹⁷ On the elusiveness of the *Rudra-yāmala* ascription in tantric literature, see T. Goudriaan – S. Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), 47–48. For an appreciation of these various purāṇic and tantric attributions, see G. V. Devasthali, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Saṃskṛta and Prākṛta Manuscripts (Bhagvatsinghji Collection & H. M. Bhadkamkar Collection) in the Library of the University of Bombay* (Bombay: The University of Bombay, 1944), Book I (Volume I & Volume II: Parts I–III), p. 511; P. K. Gode, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Government Collections of Manuscripts Deposited at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1950), Vol. XIII, Part III, Stotras etc., pp. 71–76; J. Filiozat, *Catalogue du fonds sanscrit* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des manuscrits, 1970), Fascicule II, no. 9, 11; K. Kunjunni Raja, *New Catalogus Catalogorum. An Alphabetical Register of Sanskrit and Allied Works and Authors* (Madras: University of Madras, 1971), Vol. 6, pp. 64–66; V. Varadachari, *Catalogue descriptif des manuscrits—Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts* (Pondichéry: Institut Français d’Indologie [Publications de l’Institut Français d’Indologie No. 70.], 1986), Vol. I, Mss. 1–115, pp. 110–111.

¹⁸ The *Guru-gītā* is but one among many extant *gītā*-s present on Indian soil, the *gītā* label comprising hundreds of specimens. An important phenomenon within the literature of both *Itihāsa*-s and *Purāṇa*-s, the flourishing of these *gītā*-s developed as a deliberate attempt to reproduce or imitate (at least ideally) the celebrated *Bhagavad-*

an autonomous *stotra*, certainly composed in a vedāntic milieu. Even though tradition ascribes it to Vyāsa, its author is unknown and it is presumably rather late: the oldest manuscript of the *Guru-gītā* which I was able to examine—presenting itself as part of the *Uttara-khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*—dates to 1705 (*saṃvat* 1761) and comprises a total of 168 verses.

Many *Guru-stotra*-s or *Guru-stuti*-s are abbreviated forms of the *Guru-gītā*. Having said this, one must immediately add that the *Guru-gītā* is itself an extremely porous and fluctuating 'text', since the number of its verses varies widely (and wildly) in the hundreds of manuscript copies as well as in its more recent printed editions. To cite but a few examples, some manuscripts present versions of just 45 or 52 verses, other manuscripts present versions of 140, 168 or 201.¹⁹ Concerning printed editions, Varadachari mentions two main variants: one in 134 *śloka*-s and another one in 351 *śloka*-s. He suggests

gītā. In the *Mahā-bhārata*, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is flanked by the *Anu-gītā* and fourteen other *gītā*-s of various content. In purāṇic texts, special sections, either devotional or doctrinal in content, receive the appellation of *gītā*-s, even if independent treatises or portions of larger scriptural frameworks. Indeed, even isolated collections of teachings, usually of an anonymous character, often bear the *gītā* title. Thus, a *gītā* typically takes the form of a dialogue (*saṃvāda*) between a sage or deity and a disciple or devotee, in which a teaching (*upadeśa*) is expounded, supposed to reveal a supreme metaphysical truth. These *gītā*-s may be divided into two main groups: the *gītā*-s in which the various teachings are expounded by divine masters or *ṛṣi*-s (such as the *Īśvara-gītā*, the *Vyāsa-gītā*, the *Agastya-gītā*, the *Sūta-gītā*, the *Kapila-gītā*, the *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*, the *Vasiṣṭha-gītā* and the *Avadhūta-gītā*) and the *gītā*-s in which the central figure is a deity (such as the *Śiva-gītā*, the *Brahma-gītā*, the *Uddhava-gītā*, the *Devī-gītā*, the *Lalitā-gītā*, the *Sūrya-gītā*, the *Ganeśa-gītā*, the *Rāma-gītā*, and the three *Yama-gītā*-s). Given so many *gītā* collections, one might be induced to conclude that there exists a definite literary genre, inaugurated by the extraordinary popularity of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. After all, this would not be an isolated case: the poetic genre of the *dūta-kāvya*-s, for instance, was first inaugurated by Kālidāsa's celebrated poem *Megha-dūta*. In the case of these various *gītā*-s, however, the situation is different. Just a few of these texts, such as the *Īśvara-gītā*, follow the exemplary structure of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Most *gītā*-s are wholly detached or entirely different in scope and content from the *Bhagavad-gītā* model. Thus, in these works the *gītā* titling basically refers to the metric structure in which the teachings are expressed. Though the popularity of these *gītā*-s, given their often sectarian character, cannot match the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s fame and renown, a certain number of these texts have played in the past and still play today a considerable role within many *saṃpradāya*-s and devotional circles. On the subject of *gītā*-s, see chapter XV ('Gītās, Māhātmyas, and other Religious Literature') of J. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 271–286.

¹⁹ See Gode, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–76. Only the manuscript in 140 verses presents itself as part of the *Padma Purāṇa*. The other four all present themselves as part of the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

that the *Guru-gītā* as part of the *Rudra-yāmala Tantra* constitutes a more synthetic version of the *Guru-gītā* as part of the *Skanda Purāṇa*.²⁰ However, even a cursory examination of the sources I have scrutinized shows the weakness of such a thesis. Given the great variety of *stotra*-s denominated *Guru-gītā* (despite the fact that they typically share a considerable amount of verses), it would appear more sensible to examine each of these in its own, specific cultural and regional context.

The reasons that make the *Guru-gītā* especially noteworthy are at least three: 1) It is perhaps the most paradigmatic *summa* of the irreplaceable importance of the spiritual master in the Hindū tradition, given the absence of any organized institutions such as the Church in the West.²¹ The text presents a portrait of the ideal *guru* that

²⁰ Varadachari, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–111. For an English translation of a version of the *Guru-gītā* in 352 *śloka*-s—also presenting itself as part of the *Skanda Purāṇa* (*Sanat Kumāra-saṃhitā, Uttara-khaṇḍa*)—see Swami Narayananda (trans.), *Sri Guru Gita* (Shivanandanagar: The Divine Life Society, 1999 [1st ed. 1972]). For other recent editions of versions of the *Guru-gītā* with English translation (also with commentaries), see H. v. Stietencron – K.-P. Gietz – A. Malinar – A. Kollmann – P. Schreiner – M. Brockington (eds.), *Epic and Purāṇic Bibliography (up to 1985) Annotated and with Indexes*. Compiled under the Chairmanship of Heinrich von Stietencron (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), Part II, S-Z, Indexes, pp. 1167–1169 (n. 6973, 6977, 6982).

²¹ On the subject of the master, of his ‘weight’ and social role as well as of his functions—in the first place, that of conferring initiation (*dīkṣā*) either by means of a sacred spell (*mantra*) or a teaching (*upadeśa*; in some cases, it can be purely non verbal consisting of a simple gesture, such as touching the hand or foot or throwing a glance)—there exists a wide range of literature, even though not always of first rate or scholarly level. To begin with, still deserving attention are the observations put forward by M. Weber in his *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. Translated and Edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: The Free Press, 1958) (especially chap. IX: ‘The Orthodox Restoration in India’). On the term *guru*, linked with Sanskrit *giri* (lit. ‘mountain’) and corresponding to Latin *gravis* (lit. ‘heavy,’ ‘important’), see J. Gonda, ‘À propos d’un sens magique-religieux de skt. “guru”,’ in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (1947): 124–131; J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997 [1st ed. The Hague, Mouton, 1965]), 229–283. On the term *ācārya*, other name for the teacher who shows the correct conduct (*ācāra*), see P. V. Kane, ‘The Meaning of Ācāryāḥ,’ in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 23 (1942): 206–213. On both *guru* and *ācārya*, see M. Hara, ‘Hindu Concepts of Teacher: Sanskrit *guru* and *ācārya*,’ in M. Nagatomi *et al.* (eds.), *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honor of Daniel H. H. Ingalls* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), 93–118. For a fine overview, see R. M. Steinmann, *Guru-śiṣya-sambandha. Das meister-schüler-verhältnis im traditionellen und modernen hinduismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1986); D. Gold, *The Lord as a Guru* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); A. Michaels (ed.), *The Pandit. Traditional Scholarship in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001). See also G. S. Ghurye, *Sadhus of India* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1953);

equates him to the Absolute (*brahman*), and illustrates the special relationship that the disciple must develop with him, grounded in devotion and focused on the attainment of knowledge as pathway to liberation (*mokṣa*); 2) This short poem or a collection of its verses continues to be piously recited every day, generation after generation, in the monasteries founded by Śaṅkara (8th century CE), the celebrated teacher of nondual Vedānta.²² In this tradition, the Absolute

A. Bharati, 'The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 29, 2 (1970): 267–288; P. Brent, *Godmen of India* (London: Allen Lane, 1972); A. Menen, *The New Mystics* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974); K. Singh, *Gurus, Godmen, and Good People* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1975); J. D. Mlecko, 'The Guru in Hindu Tradition,' *Numen* XXIX, Fasc. 1 (1982): 33–61; D. G. White, 'Why Gurus are Heavy,' *Numen* XXXI, Fasc. 1 (1984): 40–73; J. P. Waghorne – N. Cutler – V. Narayanan (eds.), *Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); L. A. Babb, *Redemptive Encounters. Three Modern Styles in the Hindu Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); R. Hummel, *Les gourous* (Paris – Montréal: Cerf/Fides, 1988); P. van Der Veer, *Gods on Earth: The Management of Religious Experience and Identity in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre* (London: Athlone, 1988); G. Feuerstein, *Holy Madness. The Shock Tactics and Radical Teachings of Crazy-wise Adepts, Holy Fools, and Rascal Gurus* (New York: Arkana, 1990); R. L. Gross, *The Sadhus of India: A Study of Hindu Asceticism* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1992); S. S. Uban, *The Gurus of India* (London: Fine Books, 1997); A. Copley (ed.), *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). A bibliographic guide on the subject is offered in C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 277. For a bibliography of the most popular ancient and modern *guru*-s in the Marāṭhī area, see Zelliot – Berntsen, *The Experience of Hinduism, op. cit.*, pp. 358–361. A useful inside account on the role and function of the *guru* is offered by S. Chandrasekharendra, *The Guru Tradition* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1991). For an appreciation of the peculiar phenomenon of Christian *guru*-s in contemporary South India, see W. Hoerschelmann, 'Christian Gurus': *A Study of the Life and Works of Christian Charismatic Leaders in South India* (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 1998). For an assessment as well as a bibliography of the social and political role played by *guru*-s in contemporary India, see J. Assayag, 'L'économie politique de la spiritualité: renoncement et nationalisme chez les gourous hindous depuis les années 1980,' *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* 84 (1997): 311–319. On the place of *guru*-s in modern times, see also the recent study by D. Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Cornwall: Blackwell, 2003), 167–180.

²² For an introduction to Śaṅkara's teachings, see K. H. Potter (ed.), *Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and His Pupils* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) (Vol. III of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies*). On the internal organization and daily routine of Śaṅkara's monastic orders, see W. Cenkner, *A Tradition of Teachers: Śaṅkara and the Jagadgurus Today* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983); W. Dazey, 'Tradition and Modernization in the Organization of the Daśanāmī Sannyāsins,' in A. Creel – V. Narayanan (eds.), *Monastic Life in the Christian and Hindu Traditions: A Comparative Study* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); Y. Sawai, *The Faith of Ascetics and Lay Smārtas: A Study of the Śaṅkaran Tradition of Śringerī* (Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili, 1992).

is said to manifest Itself as a triad: God (Īśvara), the *guru* and the Self (*ātman*). The master is believed to teach, through his words or even through his silence (as in the case of the divine *guru* Dakṣiṇāmūrti,²³ a form of Śiva), the eternal truth of the *Veda*-s and *Upaniṣad*-s. The fact that the *Guru-gītā* is highly esteemed in these more elitist, traditional brāhmaṇical environments reflects the veneration of which it is object.²⁴ The text also exhibits a poetic quality, rich as it is of beautiful, vivid metaphors and symbolic elements; 3) The *Guru-gītā*, on the other hand, is not a sectarian text. Just like Dattātreyā is a 'honey-bee' *yogin*, in the sense that he has been appropriated by a variety of yogic schools as their fountainhead and patron (brāhmaṇical, tantric, *śākta*, Mahānubhāva, etc.), in the same way the *Guru-gītā* is appealing to a great variety of ascetics and religious groups as well as to the laity. Precisely because of its contents, as it can be appre-

²³ For an appreciation of Dakṣiṇāmūrti's divine icon in the Vedānta milieu, see A. Mahadeva Sastry (trans.), *Dakṣiṇāmurti Stotra of Sri Sankaracharya and Dakṣiṇāmurti Upaniṣad with Sri Suresvaracharya's Manasollasa and Pranava Vartika* (Madras: Samata Books, 1978).

²⁴ See M. Piantelli, *Śaṅkara e la rinascita del brāhmanesimo* (Fossano: Editrice Esperienze, 1974), 158–159, where a hymn composed with verses taken from the *Guru-gītā* is quoted. This hymn is piously recited every morning by all monks (the source is Śrī Candrasekharendra Sarasvatī, 'Daivabhakti and Gurubhakti,' in *The Call of the Jagadguru* (Madras, 1958, p. 32). In a hagiography on Śaṅkara by Govindanātha, the *Śrī-śaṅkarācārya-carita* (probably composed in Keraḷa around the 17th century), we find a stanza (3.37) certainly from the *Guru-gītā*: 'Real abode in a sanctuary is the abiding close to the Master, and real sacred ford is the water which wets His feet! Here alone you must stay, and not go anywhere else!' See Govindanātha, *Il poema di Śaṅkara (Śrīśaṅkarācāryacarita)*. A cura di Mario Piantelli (Torino: Promolibri, 1994), pp. 44, 50. In *kevala-advaita-vedānta*, the most celebrated hymn in praise of the *guru* is certainly the *Gurvaṣṭakam* attributed to Śaṅkara. Its first verse reads thus:

śarīraṃ surūpaṃ tathā vā kalatram
yaśāścāru cūtraṃ dhanam merutulyam /
manaścenna lagnaṃ guroraṅghripadme
tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kim //
 One's body may be handsome, wife beautiful,
 fame excellent and varied, and wealth like unto Mount Meru;
 but if one's mind be not attached to the lotus feet of the *guru*,
 what thence, what thence, what thence, what thence?

For an English rendering, see T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Hymns of Śaṅkara* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997 [1st ed. 1980]), 27–32. For an appreciation of the *guru*'s invaluable role in the words of a celebrated contemporary Vedānta master, see Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal, *Divine Discourses* (Chennai: Sri Vidyatheertha Foundation, 1994), 59–160. See also Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sree Gurucharanam. A Compilation of Divine Discourses of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during Guru Purnima (1956–1998)* (Prasanthi Nilayam: Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust, 1999).

ciated by its incorporations in purāṇic texts as well as in tantric esoteric texts, the *Guru-gītā* in one of its many variants is popular in the whole of the Indian subcontinent since it 'cuts across' traditions (*sampradāya*), be they *śaiva*, *vaiṣṇava* or *śākta*: it is truly conceived as a 'classic' of Hindū piety (as the *Guru-gītā* itself proclaims, for instance in verse 151). Herein, the *guru* is celebrated as the 'chosen deity' (*iṣṭa-devatā*) to whom all acts of worship and one's whole life must be consecrated. D. R. Brooks rightly observes:

Some important Siddha Yoga scriptures curiously stand between the exoteric sources of Revelation and Recollection and esoteric Tantric categories. The most important of these is the *Gurugītā* (. . .). But the *Gurugītā* itself has a less than certain origin whether it be as a portion of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, as a section of another text known as the *Gurucaritra*, or as an independent quasi-Tantric text. This status is similarly not unusual for sources belonging to traditions of mystical yoga; they may have multiple 'stations' in the larger canon, sometimes belonging to the exoteric Recollections and sometimes associating with the esoteric Tantras. This is due largely to the fact that Tantric sources seek frequently to *include* themselves as esoteric forms of exoteric works, in other words, as secrets concealed or appearing within more public resources.²⁵

Even today in many *maṭha*-s, especially *śaiva* but also *vaiṣṇava*,²⁶ the *Guru-gītā* is sung at the feet of the *guru* or in his honor, and this *stotra* remains one of the most frequently utilized texts in daily recitation (*svādhyāya*).²⁷

Given the impossibility (and also perhaps the uselessness) of trying to reach back to the *ur-text* of what is a hymn/prayer which fluctuates in an essentially oral dimension, or even of tracing its main developments in order to put forward a tentative critical edition, I think

²⁵ D. R. Brooks – S. Durgananda – P. E. Muller-Ortega – W. K. Mahony – C. R. Bailly – S. P. Sabharatham, *Meditation Revolution. A History and Theology of the Siddha Yoga Lineage* (South Fallsburg, N.Y.: Agama Press, Muktabodha Indological Research Institute, 1997), 290–291.

²⁶ On the hypothesis, perhaps chronologically too daring, that the recitation of the *Guru-gītā* or of a collection of its verses was performed at the *āśrama* of Rāmānanda (1299–1410), and that this text was also known to his disciples Kabīr and Raidās, see P. Caracchi, *Rāmānanda e lo yoga dei sant* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1999), p. 221.

²⁷ On this, see R. B. S. C. Vidyarnava, *The Daily Practice of the Hindus. Containing Morning and Midday Duties* (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 [4th ed.]), pp. 8–9.

it more useful to consider the particular form and function which this ‘text’ has historically come to assume in each specific regional environment of the subcontinent. Here, I will focus attention on the *Guru-gītā* as it is attested within the Marāṭhī cultural milieu. In his seminal preface to his edition of the *Guru-caritra* of 1937, R. K. Kāmat evidenced how the first versions of the *Guru-caritra* incorporating the *Guru-gītā* are linked to the so-called edition of Kaḍgañcī (a village not far from Gāṇagāpūr, nowadays in Karṇāṭaka, in the Aland *tāluk*, Gulbarga District), according to tradition the hometown of the author Sarasvatī Gaṇgādhara. Among the twenty-four different versions of the *Guru-caritra* which Kāmat analyzed, the oldest incorporating the *Guru-gītā* which he identified dates to 1847.²⁸ The *Guru-caritra* versions *cum* the *Guru-gītā* are all understood to be copies of an original Kaḍgañcī edition which, unfortunately, despite claims to the contrary, has never been unearthed.

Concerning chronology, what are usually given are the dates when the copies were written from a supposed original (or from other copies of the same text). Actually, some copies—such as the first Kaḍgañcī version found by Kāmat—do not even bear a date. The oldest, datable copy studied by Kāmat was written in 1769, which he refers to as the Kengerī version (named after another town in Karṇāṭaka): this traditional (*vāḍī*) version did *not* include the *Guru-gītā*. However, among the twenty-four versions of the *Guru-caritra* which Kāmat analyzed five do include the *Guru-gītā* chapter and the oldest of these copies, as noted, dates to 1847. Although these five versions do *not* materially come from the village of Kaḍgañcī, the Marāṭhī scholar labeled these copies as Kaḍgañcī versions, since they were either copied down from the original Kaḍgañcī edition or from a copy thereof. Subsequently, in Gāṇagāpūr, Kāmat came across one more version of the *Guru-caritra* including the *Guru-gītā*. This 6th copy, which dates to 1909, he also labeled as Kaḍgañcī. It must be underlined that the oldest date of 1847 as well as the latter of 1909 refer to the dates when each version was copied down or transcribed from a prior version or supposed original (which has never been found). It may reasonably be assumed that though the first traced

²⁸ R. K. Kāmat first discovered the *Guru-gītā* chapter within the *Guru-caritra* around 1920. For his important preface, see Kāmat, *Śrīgurucaritra*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–21.

copy of the *Guru-caritra cum Guru-gītā* chapter dates to 1847, this particular form of the text originated at an earlier date. Possibly, *Guru-caritra* copies including the *Guru-gītā* insertion may have coexisted with the more traditional *Guru-caritra* versions lacking the *Guru-gītā* from as early as the second half of the 18th century, or even prior to this period.

In all *Guru-caritra*-s including the *Guru-gītā*, the latter always figures as its 49th *adhyāya*. In order to maintain the total number of the *Guru-caritra*-s chapters to 51, a reordering of *adhyāya*-s 41–49 was devised. In traditional versions of the *Guru-caritra* not comprising the *Guru-gītā* chapter, the important subject of the *Kāśī-yātrā* covers chapters 41 and 42. In the so-called Kaḍgañcī versions *cum Guru-gītā* discovered by Kāmat, these two chapters are always combined into one i.e. chapter 41 (bringing the Gāṇagāpūr chapter, with the illustrative stories of the Jalandhara demon and the miraculous cure of Ratnabāī, to be counted as *adhyāya* 48). Following Kāmat's edition of the text (listing its main variants), the *Guru-gītā* as 49th *adhyāya* of the *Guru-caritra* presents a total of 176 *śloka*-s (182 with the addition of 6 more verses according to variant readings). It is preceded by the 'firm resolution', *saṃkalpa*, and the 'consecration' of the adept's limbs, *nyāsa*, plus another 34 Marāṭhī verses in *ovī* meter, 13 placed at the beginning and 21 at the end of the Sanskrit *stotra*.

In his preface, Kāmat also mentions other, more recent versions of the *Guru-gītā* which he was able to identify: in particular, a manuscript edition belonging to one Dhūpkar Śāstrī in 140 *śloka*-s, a printed edition of 1915 edited by the Bhārat Dharma Mahāmaṇḍal in 221 *śloka*-s, and a Tamiḻ translation by V. Kuppuswami of the Shri Sharangvila Press of Tanjāvur in 352 *śloka*-s. Moreover, he signals four Marāṭhī commentaries of the *Guru-gītā*: the *Svānanda-laharī* of C. Cidānandasvāmin, edited in 1911 (*śaka* 1833), based on a version of the *Guru-gītā* in 193 *śloka*-s; the *Ĵñāna-śikhā* of Nṛsiṃha Māṇikprabhu, edited in 1921, based on a version of the *Guru-gītā* in 137 *śloka*-s; the *Guru-gītā-stotra-cintāmaṇi* of Nityānanda Sarasvatī, edited in 1929, based on a version of the *Guru-gītā* in 187 *śloka*-s; and, finally, a commentary ascribed to one Raṅganāthsvāmī Nigḍīkar, based on a version of the *Guru-gītā* in 105 *śloka*-s (recently reedited by the Ādarś Vidyārthī Prakāśan of Puṇe, n.d.).

The essential data concerning the tradition of the *Guru-gītā* in the Marāṭhī cultural area can be summarized thus:

- 1) Given the original autonomy and ‘textual porousness’ of this *stotra*—the date of which, although tendentially late, cannot be established with certainty—its insertion within the *Guru-caritra* has certainly contributed to popularize it within the framework of its 176 (or 182) *śloka*-s;
- 2) Most separate editions and versions of the *Guru-gītā* prevalent in the Marāṭhī area are dependent upon it to the largest extent. In this regard, and to limit myself just to some recent printed editions, I may cite the following: *The Nectar of Chanting*. South Fallsburg, N.Y., SYDA Foundation, 1972 (in 182 verses);²⁹ *Sri Guru Gita*. Commentary by Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. English Translation by Dr. P. G. Krishna Murthy. Mysore, Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Avadhoota Datta Peetha, 1988 (in 142 verses); *Śrī Gurugītā*. Artha evaṃ vyākhyā Svāmī Śivomtīrtha. Mumbāi, Devātmaśakti Society, 1990 (in 182 verses); Shree Maa, *The Guru and the Goddess*. The Complete Text and Translations of Kaśyapa Sūtra and Śrīgurugītā and Lalitā Triśatī. Translated by Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Saṃskṛt and Transliteration by Viṭṭalananda Saraswati. USA, Devi Mandir Publications—Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1996 (in 182 verses); *Śrī Gurugītā*. Puṇe, Anmol Prakāśan, 2000 (in 176 verses); *Śrī Gurucaritrāntārgata Śrī Gurugītā*. Mumbāi, 2000 (in 182 verses);
- 3) Leaving aside those synthetic versions of the *Guru-gītā* of just a few dozen verses, it is useful, especially for the modern period, to distinguish the *Guru-gītā* in 176 or 182 verses most diffused in the Marāṭhī milieu—always presenting itself as part of the *Uttara-khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, even when integrated within the *Guru-caritra*—from a sensibly longer version of the *Guru-gītā* in 351 or 352 verses (which incorporates, widening it, the preceding one),

²⁹ This is the version which Svāmin Muktānanda (1908–1982) of Gaṇeśpurī recently popularized within his neo-hindū yogic and devotional milieu, counting many Western followers. As Swami Durgānanda notes: ‘In 1972, he replaced the *Bhagavadgītā* with a chant that has remained the main scriptural text of Siddha Yoga: the *Gurugītā*, “Song of the Guru”. Muktananda found this philosophical poem on the guru-disciple relationship quoted within the *Gurucaritra*, a medieval (ca. 1500) hagiographic text on the primordial guru, Dattatreya, from the Maharashtrian yogic tradition. Muktananda himself had chanted it privately for many years. The *Gurugītā* became the core of the ashram morning recitation’ (Brooks *et alia*, *op. cit.*, p. 60). Rather emphatically, Swami Durgānanda, in a note, adds: ‘Swami Muktananda can be credited with bringing the *Gurugītā* out of obscurity. After he began chanting it publicly, other spiritual groups discovered and incorporated portions of it in their practice;’ *ibid.*

of which I have found trace in an edition in Tamiḻ Nāḍu and also in Uttar Pradesh;³⁰

- 4) If the *Guru-caritra* dates around 1550, the insertion in some versions of it of the *Guru-gītā*—towards the end of the poem, as its 49th *adhyāya*—is certainly later. How much later, however, is hard to say. As noted, Kāmat found the first specimen of this insertion in a copy of the *Guru-caritra* dated 1847. Kāmat's linking of the versions of the *Guru-caritra cum Guru-gītā* chapter to the 'ur' Kaḍgañcī edition, if correct, favors the hypothesis that such an appropriation was operated within a tradition and perhaps even a lineage going back to the venerable figure of Sarasvatī Gaṅgā-dhar. Possibly, *Guru-caritra*-s with *Guru-gītā* chapter were circulating already sometime around the middle or second half of the 18th century. Nonetheless, at the state of our knowledge, it cannot be proved that the insertion of the *Guru-gītā* in some versions of the *Guru-caritra* predates the 19th century.

The 49th *adhyāya* of the *Guru-caritra* begins like most other chapters with a question posed by the virtuous and well-qualified disciple Nāmdhāra to the narrator Siddhamuni, a *rāja-yogin* and a knower of *brahman* (*brahma-jñānī*), the graceful *guru* who has revealed the sacred *Guru-caritra* to the world. After the initial salutations to Gaṇeśa,³¹ the lord of wisdom and remover of obstacles, Sarasvatī,³² the goddess of learning, and Śrī Guru (= Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī), the first thirteen Marāṭhī stanzas present Nāmdhāra extolling the *master* and surrender to him as the only means to achieve liberation from this unending round of transmigration (*saṃsār*), otherwise impossible to cross. Only the *guru* possesses that medicine which will cure once and for all the ailment of existence (*bhav*): this is said to be the doctrine propounded by the wise ones throughout the ages. The teacher is magnified as the mythic cow of plenty which grants all desires

³⁰ See Swami Narayananda, *Sri Guru Gita*, *op. cit.*

³¹ For an excellent introduction to the elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, see P. Courtright, *Gaṇeśa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). See also R. L. Brown (ed.), *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991); J. A. Grimes, *Gaṇapati: Song of the Self* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995).

³² For an overview of the goddess Sarasvatī, at the time of the *Veda*-s primarily celebrated as a grand river, see D. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses*, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–64.

(Kāmadhenu, the first of the ‘treasures’ produced from the churning of the ocean or *samudra-manthana* operated by *deva*-s and *asura*-s). Through selfless dedication to him sages such as Śukamuni and the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha, who knew the very essence of scriptures, are said to have attained *mokṣa*. Since the path of the *guru* is what leads to liberation, and precisely this was elucidated in a purifying and felicitous dialogue of Śiva with Pārvatī, Nāmdhāraṅk prays Siddhamuni to tell him, for the upliftment of all people, how Pārvatī questioned Lord Śiva and how Lord Śiva responded. This query of the disciple is said to mightily please Siddhamuni, who declares:

Oh my child, who are ever diligent in the service of the *guru*, your life is indeed blessed! You have sought the eternal knowledge that will awaken you from the stupor of ignorance to the sunlight of truth! Listen with concentration, oh servant of the *guru*, the answer to your well-conceived question! Long long ago, Lord Śaṅkar (lit. ‘Benefactor’, a name of Śiva), the Vanquisher of Tripura (= the city of the *asura* demons destroyed by Śiva), was seated on the peak of Mount Kailās (= a mountain in the Himālaya, north of the Mānasa lake, believed to be the abode of Śiva’s paradise) when His consort, the Daughter of the Mountain (= Himālaya), Pārvatī, asked Him a question for the upliftment of humanity.

Precisely at this point the Sanskrit *Guru-gītā* begins.³³ The 176 verses of the *Guru-caritra*’s *Guru-gītā* do not present a coherent and clear-cut structure. After the traditional, introductory stanzas comprising *saṃkalpa* and *nyāsa*, at the initial question posed by Pārvatī on how it is possible for the embodied soul to attain identity with the Absolute *brahman* (verse 3) Śiva’s reply follows (verses 4–65). References are made in verses 57–58 to the yogic practice of visualizing and incorporating the divine form in the *cakra*-s i.e. the ‘circles’ of one’s subtle body according to tantric physiology, and to the all-important yogic *mantra* so ‘*ham*’ (lit. ‘That I [am]’, expressing one’s identity with the Absolute *brahman*, as reflected in verse 114). This *mantra*, together with its interchangeable form *haṃsaḥ*, is technically known as *ajapa-kriyā* i.e. ‘practice of the un-muttered *mantra*’, since it is thought to be constantly performed through the natural breathing in and breath-

³³ I have followed Kāmat’s standard edition. In his sixty-six footnotes to the *Guru-gītā* chapter, more than half highlight slight variants based on all the editions and commentaries which he was able to gather and compare. The English translation of the *Guru-gītā* verses is mine.

ing out process. From verse 66, Śiva explains how to practice meditation (*dhyāna*) on the *guru*, and especially from verse 87 onwards he outlines the contemplative exercise which the adept must carry out in an effort to internalize the 'guru principle' (*guru-tattva*). More references are made to the yogic practice of visualizing the *guru* within the *cakra*-s (verses 91–92, 95, 113). In verses 115–122, Śiva presents the effects produced upon the *yogin* or *bhakta* who has perfectly interiorized the *guru* as his own *puruṣa* or *sad-guru*. In other versions of the *Guru-gītā* there are three additional verses after verse 119, offering an explanation of the meditative planes of *piṇḍa* (lit. 'massiveness'; in yogic and tantric texts, *piṇḍa* or *piṇḍāṇḍa* usually refers to the microcosm of the human body: herein, it specifically identifies the potency or *śakti* of the *kuṇḍalinī* energy),³⁴ *pada* (lit. 'position', here relative to the spontaneous repetition of the *haṃsaḥ/so 'ham mantra*), *rūpa* (lit. 'form', the realm of form), and *rūpa-atīta* (lit. 'superior-to-form', the transcendent realm or state beyond form).³⁵ From verse 123 up to the end, Śiva expounds the traditional *phala-śruti*, that is, the extraordinary results—both in the worldly as well as in the spiritual sphere—which one can derive from the pious recitation of the *Guru-gītā*. Again to be noted is that in other versions of the *Guru-gītā*, Śiva, in two additional verses after verse 133, offers advice on meditative postures and sittings, presenting the positive and negative effects to be derived. Śiva also presents the auspicious places where the *Guru-gītā* should be recited (verses 147–150; in verse 169 the most auspicious place is said to be absorption in the *guru* himself i.e. in his heart). In verse 173, Śiva instructs his spouse never to reveal this secret teaching and to guard it carefully. Its esoteric quality is such that, in verse 174, Śiva admonishes Pārvatī not to reveal it even mentally to the other gods (be it Viṣṇu or their sons Gaṇeśa and Skanda!). Eventually, the *Guru-gītā* may be taught only to those rare, mature (and orthodox! i.e. *astika*) adepts who are full of faith (*śraddhā*) and devotion (*bhakti*; see the final verses 175–176). In one last, additional verse closing other separate versions of the hymn, Śiva himself honors the *Guru-gītā* with these solemn words:

³⁴ On *kuṇḍalinī* in tantric yoga, see the monograph of L. Silburn, *La Kuṇḍalinī ou l'énergie des profondeurs* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1983).

³⁵ On these tantric meditative planes and their various equivalences in the *Kubjikāmatā Tantra* (ch. XIV–XIX), see Goudriaan – Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

- To [that] unique *mantra* which saves [man] from
the ocean of rebirth,
to [that] perfect *mantra* which is venerated by all
the gods beginning with Brahmā as well
as by all ascetics having made the vow of
silence,
to [that] *mantra* which annihilates poverty, pain,
fear, and anguish (or: the disease of mun-
dane existence),
to that *mantra* which is the most excellent of
Masters, which removes the great fear
[of transmigration], I render honor!

As noted, the *Guru-gītā* chapter inserted within the *Guru-caritra* explicitly presents itself as a dialogue between Īśvara (= Śiva) and Pārvatī derived from the *Uttara-khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Not surprisingly, herein the *Guru-gītā* is concluded by declaring that the *stotra* is offered to the Venerable *guru*-God Dattātreya (*śrī-guru-deva-dattātreya-arpaṇam-astu*), in the *Datta-sampradāya* revered along with his *avatāra*-s as the supreme paradigm of the divine Master.

The Sanskrit *stotra* is followed by twenty-one more Marāṭhī stanzas (verses 14–34, reconnecting with verses 1–13 introducing the *Guru-gītā*), which bring this 49th *adhyāya* of the *Guru-caritra* to an end. In sum, these twenty-one verses reaffirm the essential doctrines highlighted in the poem and their special relevance in the present *kali* age. In stanzas 25–28, it is stated that *śrī-guru-mūrti*, identified with the ‘king of ascetics’ (*avadhūt-rāy*) Dattātreya, in the present age first incarnated in the pure, *sāttvik* human form of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha, thus opening the phase of Datta’s ‘historical *avatāra*-s’.

The *Guru-gītā* is thus a devotional hymn, a *stotra* in which each verse has a force of its own and is often loosely connected to the following one. Some of its verses also bear a distinctive Upaniṣadic flavor (see, for instance, verse 40, echoing the *Kena Upaniṣad*; verse 82, echoing *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 2.3.6; as well as verses 63 and 89³⁶). Rather than presenting an analytic study of each verse or delving into the technicalities of the suggested yogic meditative absorptions on the highest *cakra*-s, I will here focus attention on three main stages which the disciple is ideally called by the *guru* to practice and

³⁶ For a contemporary, word-for-word interpretation of this *Guru-gītā* verse, see Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sree Gurucharanam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–49.

experience. Given the overall unsystematic nature of this *stotra* (despite its purported '*sāṃkhya*' structure, see verse 162) the isolation of these subsequent stages or conditions has a purely heuristic value i.e. reflects my own understanding of the *guru-śiṣya* relation as I think it can be derived from reading the *Guru-gītā*. What follows is therefore a kind of 'rationalization' of the overall 'path' which the *guru* adept is ideally called to embark upon.

1) Couched within a vedāntic framework, the emphasis of the text is constantly placed on the unflinching, total faith and surrender a disciple must cultivate towards his physical master in words, thoughts, and deeds. In principle, nothing else is needed to achieve final emancipation (*mokṣa*) since there is nothing superior to one's *guru* who is the actual, concrete proof of the reality of *brahman*. If he didn't exist, the entire universe would not exist: indeed, he is said to be the one responsible for the making, maintenance, and destruction of the worlds. As the one fixed in *brahman* and who is *brahman*, he illumines all states of consciousness: the waking state, the dream state, the dreamless state, as well as the 'fourth' (*turīya*; see verse 38, echoing the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*). To quote but a few significant verses:

- (18) Always remember the *guru*'s form!
 Constantly repeat the [divine] name given by the *guru* (or: of the *guru*)!
 [Always] follow the *guru*'s command!
 Think of nothing other than the *guru*!
- (22) In the three worlds openly proclaim
 the gods with their retinues, the demons and snakes:
 'The knowledge lying on the tongue of the *guru*
 is obtained only through devotion to the *guru*.'
- (28) Through actions, mind and speech
 one should constantly worship the *guru*!
 Prostrate fully on the ground
 before the *guru* without reserve!
- (32) The *guru* is Brahmā, the *guru* is Viṣṇu,
 the *guru* is [Śiva] Maheśvara (lit. 'the Great Lord')!
 The *guru* is indeed the Absolute *brahman*:
 adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!
- (34) The eye of one who is blinded by the cataract of ignorance
 with the stick soaked in the collyrium of knowledge

- is opened thanks to Him:
adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!³⁷
- (35) You are my father and my mother,
my brother and my God,
with the aim of awakening me from [the nightmare of]
transmigration:
adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!
- (36) From His Reality (= the Master as *brahman*) the world
derives its reality,
thanks to His Light this [world] shines forth,
and because of His Bliss [creatures] rejoice:
adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!
- (44) If Śiva³⁸ is angry the *guru* protects you,
but if the *guru* is angry, even Śiva cannot save you!
Therefore, with every effort,
take refuge in the Venerable *guru*!
- (47) He is [Śiva], the Witness of all, [but] without the three eyes,
he is [Viṣṇu], the Imperishable, [but] without the four arms,
he is Brahmā, [but] without the four faces:
thus the Venerable *guru* is declared to be, oh Dear [Pārvatī]!
- (50) The pair of the feet of the Venerable Lord
in whatever direction they may shine,
precisely in that very direction one should prostrate himself
in devout adoration, every day, oh Beloved [Pārvatī]!
- (76) The root of contemplation is the *guru*'s form!
The root of worship is the *guru*'s foot!
The root of the *mantra* is the *guru*'s word!
The root of liberation is the *guru*'s grace!

I could continue quoting similar verses for several more pages. The fundamental message that the *Guru-gītā* is eager to convey is that only selfless devotion and surrender to the will of one's master is *the* pathway to salvation from worldly pain and rebirth: the *guru* alone

³⁷ The *guru* is here extolled as bestower of supreme, liberating gnosis (*jñāna*, *vidyā*): this is indeed his fundamental role! As a popular hagiography extolling Śaṅkara declares: 'May the Light of that Jewel which is the Master shine in the palace of my mind! Such Jewel, having dispelled the darkness of ignorance, reveals the inner meaning of the words of all sacred texts!' (*Śrī-śaṅkarācārya-carita* 1.4).

³⁸ Verse 79 is identical to this one, only Viṣṇu takes the place of Śiva.

is said to be the bestower of both material welfare (*bhukti*) as well as liberation (*mukti*; see verses 72, 87, 160–161), this being a common refrain in tantric literature.³⁹ Surrender to the master is the cornerstone teaching of the whole *stotra*, and, in a way, its '*alfa* and *omega*' since even in the following phases or stages this principle is never relinquished but rather deepened and sublimated. This phase, especially for what concerns the prime, crucial steps in the *bhakti-mārga*, is to be understood as a cleansing, purifying process, a cathartic *preparatio*: one's complete faith in the *guru* is expected to naturally bear the fruits of pure ethical behavior, brāhmaṇical orthopraxis. The psychological⁴⁰ and even physical dependence of the disciple upon his *guru* is total: the latter exercises full power and authority over the former, whose ego and individuality is to be obliterated, being called to a life of perfect obedience, humility, and submission to the master as his/her veritable God even if the *guru* be strange, whimsical, and should appear not to behave properly (verse 102; the *guru*, being equal to *brahman*, is the paradigm of perfect freedom: he is thus ultimately inconceivable, unpredictable, and a law unto himself).⁴¹ In other words, once the choice of the *guru* has been made, the 'spiritual parent' should be as fixed as any other kin. Thus, the

³⁹ For a general introduction to tantric ideology and practice, see A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider & Co., 1975); S. Gupta – D. J. Hoens – T. Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden: Brill, 1979); D. G. White (ed.), *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ On the psychology of the relationship between the *guru* and his disciple, based upon the complete surrender of the latter to the former, see the insightful study by S. Kakar, *The Analyst and the Mystic: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Religion and Mysticism* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991), 52–60. By the same author, see also *The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁴¹ The master's behavior is believed to be perfect and holy at all times and under all circumstances. The *guru* is often expected to speak and act in strange, unpredictable ways. His seemingly *a-dharmic*, antinomian character borders sometimes with madness and, indeed, as a popular Marāṭhī saying goes, 'a saint who is not mad is not a saint!'. On the behavior of saints as if mad, see D. Kinsley, "'Through the Looking Glass": Divine Madness in the Hindu Religious Tradition,' *History of Religions* 13 n. 4 (May 1974): 270–305. See also A. Feldhaus, *The Deeds of God in Rddhipur* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); J. McDaniel, *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Feuerstein, *Holy Madness*, *op. cit.* For an appreciation of the subtle ties between madness and saintliness in the Marāṭhī milieu of the last century, see W. Donkin, *The Wayfarers: An Account of the Work of Meher Baba with the God-Intoxicated, and also with Advanced Souls, Sadhus and the Poor* (San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1969 [2nd printing]).

disciple must never challenge the master: any ill-behavior towards the *guru* is said to condemn the adept to a hellish rebirth since his curse is dreadful and most powerful, and not even the gods can subvert it (verses 103–104, 106). Only if the *guru* is satisfied with the disciple the latter's prayers, vows, and penances will bear fruit (verse 166). Since everything belongs to the master, the adept must always be ready to offer him his material possessions as well as his own wife (verses 26–29). The heart of the *guru* or full contemplative absorption upon him is declared to be the supreme pilgrimage place, as the big toe of his right foot is the receptacle of all sacred places (verse 169). It is clearly stated that only through such devotion and service to the master can liberating knowledge (*jñāna*, *vidyā*) arise, since only if the pupil submits himself/herself totally to the master can the *guru's* grace be showered (verses 48, 55–56, 83, 110). In this regard, the three verses which—following a time-honored tradition—purport to explain the true meaning of the term *guru* are noteworthy:

- (23) The syllable *gu* is darkness, and
 the syllable *ru* is said to be light!
 The *brahman* which swallows [the darkness] of ignorance
 is solely the *guru*, there is no doubt!
- (24) The first syllable *gu*
 evidences the attributes [which are intrinsic to Nature] such
 as cosmic illusion (= *māyā*) and so on.
 The second syllable *ru* [evidences] *brahman*,
 which destroys the error [generated from the only apparent
 reality] of cosmic illusion.
- (46) The syllable *gu* indicates that which is beyond the attributes
 [which are intrinsic to Nature] and
 the syllable *ru* that which is without form.
 He who bestows [on the disciple] the [realization of his]
 true identity, beyond [all] attributes [and forms], that one
 is said to be the *guru*!

Curiously enough, the first part of verse 24, where *gu* is interpreted to stand for the *guṇa*-s i.e. the attributes or qualities of the material world (*prakṛti*), is contradicted by the first part of verse 46, where *gu* is said to stand for *guṇa-atīta* i.e. that Principle (= the *guru* as *brahman*) which is beyond all attributes. Despite being opposite, both interpretations are common and coexist within devotional circles.

The two syllables which make up the term *guru* are proclaimed to be the supreme *mantra* (verse 107). Precisely in order to predispose himself/herself to be the fitting recipient of the *guru*'s gift of *jñāna*, the disciple is instructed to plunge into yogic, meditative exercises, which may be regarded as the second, fundamental step.

2) Whereas the first, 'dualistic' phase can be defined—to a lesser or greater degree of maturity—a popular one, given the preponderance of the emotional element attracting masses of devotees to the *guru*, this second one is reserved only to the spiritual *virtuosi*, typically represented by the inner-circle of the *guru*'s pupils. The ideal, traditional Hindū setting is that of the peaceful life at the monastery or hermitage (*āśrama*), where the *guru*, surrounded by his disciples (*yogin*-s, renunciators, etc.), guides them in all ritual and meditative practices. At this stage, the disciple is called to practice a strong and constant effort in order to achieve the *interiorization* of the 'guru principle', that is, he/she must come to realize the master's spiritual essence, which is exactly the same as the one which lies within one-self. The discovery through various yogic and meditative techniques of the inner *sad-guru*, coincides with the realization of one's true being, which is the *ātman*. Thus, in a vedāntic perspective, the *guru* who is *brahman* is eventually discovered to be none other than one's own *ātman*. Such interiorization of the *guru* marks a definite turning point: the outer, physical appearance of the human *guru*—although persisting—is now transmuted, transcended. The ordinary subject-object dichotomy, as well as all past dualisms, are utterly obliterated. The previous dependent relationship to the human *guru* leaves space to the recognition of a pure identity, a spiritual non-otherness (*ananyatā*).

Even before verse 66—at which point Śiva explicitly says he will explain to Pārvatī how to practice true meditation—we find references to the practices of interiorization and inner absorption:

- (9) The *guru* is none other than the conscious Self:
This is the truth, this is the truth, there is no doubt!
In order to attain It, an effort
should certainly be made by the wise!
- (15) Having drunk the water of the *guru*'s feet,
one should eat the food that has been left by the *guru*!
One should constantly meditate on the divine form of the *guru*,
and always repeat the *guru*'s *mantra*!

- (54) Mental absorption on the physical form of one's *guru*,
 is mental absorption on the Infinite Śiva (= *brahman*),
 and the singing glorifying the names of one's *guru*,
 is the singing in praise of the Infinite Śiva!

Verses 57 and 58 refer to the lotus feet of the *guru*, paradigm of the 'guru principle', being situated in the highest 'circle of the thousand rays' (*sahasrāra-cakra*), and verse 61 proclaims the *so 'ham* to be the king of *mantra*-s, the repetition of which in the inhaling (*so*) and exhaling (*ham*) process is believed to purify the adept and protect from death itself. Once the adept's Self reflects that bliss which has the form of Consciousness i.e. the 'guru principle', he/she comes to recognize in a flash the *ab aeterno* identity with *brahman*, which is conveyed by the semantic meaning of *so 'ham* (verse 114).

Especially from verse 87 onwards, Śiva teaches Pārvatī the meditative exercises to be practiced in order to interiorize the *guru*. Verses 91 and 113–114 locate the divine form of the *guru* as seated in the heart lotus, that is, in the *anāhata-cakra*: the adept is called to visualize the form of the master seated herein, imagined as holding the *Veda*-s (lit. 'the book of Consciousness', *cit-pustika*) in his left hand and conferring blessings with his right hand fixed in the 'seal of Consciousness' (*cin-mudrā*): such an idealized portrait of the *guru* is quite popular and it especially calls to mind the way Śaṅkara, paradigm of the perfect master in the *kevala-advaita-vedānta* tradition, is represented. Again, verse 95 advises the yogic adept to contemplate the *guru* as seated in the white lotus at the top of his/her head, that is, in the highest *sahasrāra-cakra*: here the master, supremely serene, with one hand bestowing his blessings (*varada-mudrā*) and the other one bestowing the gift of non-fear (*abhaya-mudrā*), is revered as Śiva or *brahman*.

Through the contemplative technique of *so 'ham* as *ajapa-kriyā* (verse 114), Śiva goes on presenting the effects produced upon the *yogin* who has perfectly interiorized the *guru* as his/her own spirit (*puruṣa*). The experience which characterizes one's achievement of perfect interiorization of the *sad-guru* is solemnly proclaimed in verses 115–116:

- (115) In whom contemplates the thumb-sized *Puruṣa*,⁴²
 who is Consciousness, [residing] in the heart (= one's Self),

⁴² The *aṅguṣṭha-mātra-puruṣa* or 'thumb-sized *Puruṣa*' refers to the presence of the

listen to that [particular] condition which then arises:

I'm now going to tell you!

- (116) Indeed, That is to be recognized as the Transcendent, the
Inaccessible [to thought],
That which is without name and form,
[Pure] Silence:
[such] is *brahman*, Its intrinsic nature, oh Pārvatī!

As verse 119 declares, the *yogin* or adept who has properly undertaken the contemplation of the *guru* (*guru-dhyāna*) becomes *brahman* (*svayaṃ brahma-mayo bhavet*)! And verse 153 establishes that a disciple who is fully devoted to his master, precisely in virtue of such identification and interiorization process, *becomes* the master (*sa eva ca guruḥ sākṣāt*). In the same way as water merges into the ocean, so the individual soul reunites and dissolves itself into the Supreme (verses 157–158).

3) The final state coincides with the spontaneous, innate awareness, beyond thoughts and words, of the *guru*'s or *brahman*'s omnipresence everywhere and in everyone in the 'outer world'. Once the discovery within oneself of the 'guru principle' i.e. of the identity *ātman-brahman* has been definitely achieved, the disciple acquires the status of a *jīvanmukta* or of one 'liberated while living',⁴³ and may in turn be regarded as a *guru*. This state is perfectly natural and no introspective efforts are anymore needed: he/she does not need to embark in formal meditative sessions. The adept has by now realized that there is only *brahman*, and that the ordinary experiences of worldly life are but illusory appearances or partial manifestations of that Absolute. This state, which is the pinnacle of liberating *gnosis* (*jñāna*), might be referred to as the universalization or 'maximization' of divine presence: wherever the realized soul goes or looks, whoever he or she sees, whatever he or she does, it is always the *guru* i.e. *brahman* that he or she experiences. Indeed, there is no one, no place, no thing which is not *brahman*! In final analysis, this state is

Self or *ātman* within one's body/heart; *loci classici* in Upaniṣadic literature are *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4.12–13, 6.17 and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.13, 5.8.

⁴³ On the notion of *jīvanmukti*, see G. Oberhammer, *La délivrance, dès cette vie* (*jīvanmukti*) (Paris: de Boccard [Collège de France – Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Fasc. 61], 1994); A. O. Fort – P. Mumme (eds.), *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996); A. O. Fort, *Jīvanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedānta* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998).

the natural outcome of the perfect achievement of the previous processes of interiorization and ‘minimization’/annihilation of one’s ego (*ahamkāra*). In theistic terms, it might be argued that the adept lives now fully and spontaneously absorbed in God’s presence, at all times: both within and without, he/she is enveloped and engrossed in the ‘*guru*-God principle’. Such discovery of the oneness of all (*ekatva*) in God brings peace (*śānti*) and equanimity (*śamatva*), even while engaged in the worldly activity of daily life. Formal reverence to the name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) of one’s human *guru* is maintained, although by now all dichotomies and dependent relations have simply evaporated. The former disciple has achieved perfect freedom and autonomy (*svātantrya*). In order to reach this ultimate goal, the passing through the first stage of intense devotion and being utterly dependent from the *guru* is viewed as a necessary prerequisite. The *Guru-gītā* illustrates the achievement of such final liberation (*mokṣa*) in a variety of ways. Thus, at various points in the *stotra*, Śiva proclaims:

- (62) It [the *guru* principle] moves and moves not,
 It is far as well as near!
 It is inside everything
 as well as outside everything!
- (71) [The entire universe], the movable and the immovable,
 the animate and the inanimate,
 by Him is pervaded:
 adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!
- (75) My Lord is the Venerable Lord of the universe!
 My Master is the Master of the three worlds!
 My Self is the Self of all beings!
 Adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!

The realization of *brahman*’s omnipresence is echoed in the following verse:

- (97) This, indeed, is Śiva! And this too, is also Śiva!
 And this other one is also Śiva! And this other one too is Śiva!
 This is My teaching! This is My teaching!
 This is My teaching! This is My teaching!

Verse 109 explicitly declares that everything is *brahman*: though being without any exterior appearance i.e. Imperceptible, *brahman* as Light illumines all individual souls (*sarvaṃ brahma nīrābhāsaṃ dīpo dīpāntaraṃ yathā*). Verses 111 and 112 solemnly equate *brahman* and the *guru*:

- (111) To the One in Whom all things are included, from Brahmā
 down to a blade of grass,
 Whose nature is that of the supreme Self,
 to the One of Whom the entire universe is made, the
 movable and the immovable,
 I prostrate myself!
- (112) I bow always to the *guru*, Who is Being-Consciousness-Bliss,
 Who transcends all differences!
 He is Eternal, Perfect, Formless,
 Attributeless, established in His own Self!

In verse 118, Śiva underlines the freedom and joy of the enlightened adept. He or she may now abide anywhere (see also verses 154–156, 158), since at all places and times his/her identity with *brahman* or fusion with the *guru*—who is recognized as the intimate essence of all things—is full and perfect:

- (118) After having attained such State (= one's identity with *brahman*),
 one may live anywhere!
 Wherever one is,
 one's contemplation [on the *guru*] will be like that of the worm
 on the wasp!

This metaphor reflects the teaching conveyed by the 24th and last master of Dattātreya, as narrated in a celebrated purāṇic tale.⁴⁴ As K. V. R. Rao observes:

⁴⁴ The *locus classicus* for this story is *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.7.24–11.9.33 (corresponding to *Uddhava-gītā* 2–4), where we find a dialogue between King Yadu and a young *avadhūta*, which tradition identifies with Dattātreya. The *avadhūta* teaches the secret of happiness, which lies in detachment (*vairāgya*), acquired through the careful observation of the laws of nature. The twenty-four masters comprise the five elements, the sun and moon, the sea, twelve animals (the pigeon, the python, the moth, the bee, the elephant, the honey gatherer, the fallow deer, the fish, the osprey, the snake, the spider, and the wasp), the prostitute Piṅgalā, a child, a young girl, and an arrow maker. A parallel text in which a sage (*jñānin*) presents six masters of his—Piṅgalā, the osprey, the snake, the bee, an arrow maker, and a young girl—is found in *Skanda Purāṇa* VI, *Nāgara-khaṇḍa* 184.11–185.91. The idea is that the real *guru* one must rely upon is nature, saturated with God. The connection between the renouncers' milieu and the animal kingdom has always been very strong. The woods is typically presented as the ideal *habitat* of the ascetic, from which he learns all that he needs to know and through which he 'deconstructs' his limited ego together with all his ideological and cultural conditionings. Already in *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 43.48–58, Dattātreya points at various animals (ants, mice, lizards, sparrows,

As per the Brahmara-Keetaka [*bhramara-kīṭa*, *Vespa solitaria*] Nyaya, whereby the (ugly looking) beetle gets metamorphosed and transfigured into the beautiful Bhramara itself, so also the Jiva, stricken with ignorance and all the afflictions of worldly life, attains enlightenment, blossoms forth and begins to shine in his Atmic (Divine) splendour, just like his Guru, through Nidhidhyasana [*nididhyāsana*, intense meditation] on the Guru and the Guropadesa [= the teaching of the master].⁴⁵

Indeed, no more special abode is recognized for *brahman* or the ‘*guru* principle’. In this perspective i.e. *sub specie brahman*, everything is holy and sacred:

- (120) Having become one with everything,
 may [the adept] perceive the Highest Truth!
 There is nothing higher than the Highest!
 All this is without [any particular] abode (= *brahman* is all-pervasive)!

Such transforming awareness should spontaneously lead the disciple to a condition of pure detachment, equanimity, and peace:

- (121) Having experienced It (= *brahman*),
 remain free from all attachments,
 in solitude, without desires, pacified,
 in virtue of His (= the *guru*’s) grace!

deer, etc.) as masters of detachment and other virtues. As the well-known contemporary *guru* Satya Sāi Bābā of Puṭṭaparthi (b. 23 November, 1926) cogently notes: ‘There is no need to wander in search of a *Guru* (preceptor). Learn lessons from every living being, everything that you find around you. Learn faithfulness and gratitude from the dog, patience and fortitude from the donkey, perseverance from the spider, farsightedness from the ant and monogamy from the owl;’ Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sree Gurucharanam*, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Moreover: ‘The world itself is a great teacher, a constant guide and inspiration. That is the reason why man is surrounded and sustained by the world. Every bird, every animal, every tree, mountain and star, each tiny worm, has a lesson for man, if he has but the will and the thirst to learn. These make the world a veritable university for man; it is a *Gurukul* (sacred commune of preceptor with disciples) where he is a pupil from birth to death;’ *ibid.*, p. 14. On the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* tale, see my *Dattātreyā*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–42. For a modern interpretation of Dattātreyā’s twenty-four masters, see Y. H. Yadav, *Glimpses of Greatness* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1991 [3rd ed.]), 33–55; S. Sivananda, *Hindu Fasts and Festivals* (Shivanandanagar: Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press, 1987), 65–70; S. S. Keshavadās, *Sadguru Dattatreyā* (Oakland: Vishva Dharma Publications, 1988), 8–16.

⁴⁵ Rao, *Guru Charitra*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

Oneness with all things brings with itself the adept's omniscience and perfect bliss (*ānanda*). The place where he or she—now the archetype of the *guru*—happens to be, is revered as the receptacle of merit (*punya*):

- (123) 'The condition of omniscience—so say
the sages—is that in which the embodied soul
becomes one with everything.'
Being ever-blissful, ever-peaceful,
who has achieved such state abides in perfect
joy wherever [he may be]!
- (124) Wherever he lives,
that place becomes a receptacle of merit!
Oh Goddess, the distinctive feature of the liberated one
I have thus described to you in full!

All actions—bodily, vocal, and mental—performed by the 'liberated while living', being totally selfless and without attachment, are believed to be free of *karman* and thus not at all binding (see verse 127, echoing the *naiṣkarmya* doctrine of the *Bhagavad-gītā*).

The insertion of the Sanskrit *Guru-gītā* into the Marāṭhī *Guru-caritra* is clearly aimed at nobilitating the latter, emphasizing its tie to the brāhmaṇical 'great tradition' and elevating its sectarian figures to the status of supreme *guru*-s, mirroring Dattātreya's paradigmatic model. Such phenomenon of inter-textuality is not at all rare, being commonly resorted to, especially in medieval devotional literature. Echoes of the *Guru-gītā* can be found also in other *adhyāya*-s of the *Guru-caritra*, notably in the 2nd chapter, in the so-called *Kali-Brahmā saṁvād*, the dialogue between Brahmā and the present Kali age personified, where the essential theme (*upakram*) of the *Guru-caritra* is spelled out. Herein, Brahmā expounds the importance of the *guru* to Kali while dispatching him to the earth. This dialogue, like most other stories in the *Guru-caritra*, is a re-elaboration of a purāṇic account.⁴⁶ In the *Guru-caritra*'s 2nd chapter we find quoted a few Sanskrit *śloka*-s (131, 133, 136, 138, 140, 145, 204, 276) and to be sure some of its verses resemble, both thematically and verbally,

⁴⁶ A possible source is the late *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*. For an overview of this text, see L. Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 160–164.

Guru-gītā verses. Thus, verses 128–130, with their symbolic interpretation of the term *guru*, call to mind *Guru-gītā* 23, Sanskrit verse 133 is similar to *Guru-gītā* 35, Sanskrit verse 136 is almost identical to the famous verse of *Guru-gītā* 32 ('The *guru* is Brahmā, the *guru* is Viṣṇu, the *guru* is [Śiva] Maheśvara! The *guru* is indeed the Absolute *brahman*: adoring salutations be paid to this Venerable *guru*!'),⁴⁷ and other Sanskrit verses such as 138 and 145 closely recall our *stotra*. Besides the above-mentioned *śloka*-s in chapter 2, the occurrence of Sanskrit verses is rare in the *Guru-caritra*. I may here recall a couple of *śloka*-s in *adhyāya* 13 (verses 83–85), relative to the encounter between Śrī Guru and one Mādhavāraṇya at Mañjarikā, on the banks of the Godāvarī.⁴⁸ Also, worthy to be mentioned are a few Sanskrit *śloka*-s in *adhyāya* 41 (verses 187, 264, 312–313, 391, 428), where the *saṅkalpa* and *samarpaṇa mantra*-s of the various processions (*yātrā*-s) to holy Kāśī⁴⁹ are cited. Close to the end of this chapter, especially significant are the eight Sanskrit verses of the *stotra-aṣṭaka* (401–408). With reference to the *guru* issue, it should be noted that some of the many Marāṭhī verses praising Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī in the *Guru-caritra* could well be interpreted as free renderings of Sanskrit *śloka*-s which are found in the *Guru-gītā*.

If the *Guru-gītā* is to be viewed as the ideal presentation of the divine *guru* leading to enlightenment, the *Guru-caritra*, by incorporating it, aims at representing its highest *exemplum*, through the narration of the lives of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha and especially of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. Indeed, Siddhamuni's recounting of the *Guru-gītā* to Nām-

⁴⁷ This often quoted, celebrated verse has been interpreted in a number of ways. For instance, Satya Sai Baba observes: '*Gurur-Brahma*: The Brahma referred to here is not the creator. It refers to *Vaak*. *Gurur-Vishnu* refers to the all-pervasive mind, which is present in all beings. This is the *Vishnu* principle. *Gurur-devo Maheswarah*: This refers to the seat of the heart. *Guru-saakshaath Para Brahma*: This means that the unity of speech, mind and heart represents the Supreme *Atma*, which should be revered as *Guru*;' Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sree Gurucharanam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁸ On the Godāvarī, the Ganges of Mahārāṣṭra, as well as on the beliefs concerning rivers, confluences, and sacred fords in the Marāṭhī cultural area, see the excellent monograph of A. Feldhaus, *Water and Womanhood: Religious Meanings of Rivers in Maharashtra* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁹ For a thorough introduction to Kāśī (lit. 'the Luminous,' nowadays called Vārāṇasī), revered as the holiest of places by all Hindū-s, see the monograph of D. L. Eck, *Banaras, City of Light* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982). See also Ch. Justice, *Dying the Good Death: The Pilgrimage to Die in India's Holy City* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997).

dhāraḥ is obviously meant to affirm Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's role as supreme *guru*: precisely *he* is the one the *Guru-gītā* is extolling and depicting! The path of *bhakti* (*bhakti-mārga*) finds here its fulfillment. The identification of the major *tīrtha*-s of Gāṇagāpūr as *śaiva* in the preceding 48th *adhyaḥya* as well as of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (after all, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu!) with Śiva, should not surprise us: in fact, not only 'the synthesis of Shaivism and Vaishnavism (. . .) is the hallmark of Maharashtrian Hinduism',⁵⁰ but also the cult of Dattātreya exhibits in an exemplary way this integrative force, with a typical prevalence of the *śaiva* element.⁵¹

Theology aside, the appropriation of this Sanskrit *stotra* affirming the *guru* as the highest authority is meant to further legitimize and qualify the *sampradāya*'s brāhmaṇical status, re-enforcing the social weight of the movement of the Datta adepts who consider the *Gurucaritra* as their sacred text. The *Guru-gītā*'s intrinsic authority is understood as a glorification of Dattātreya as supreme master, and is further utilized for affirming the brāhmaṇical *auctoritas* of the *Datta-sampradāya*, a social as well as religious movement aiming at vigorously reaffirming a Hindū ritualistic ethos, particularly in an anti-Islāmic function. In all this, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's belonging to the *daśanāmī* order of the great Śaṅkara must have played a significant role. Differently from the more popular *Vārkarī-sampradāya*—a basically inter-sectarian movement open to all and diffused especially in rural environments—the *Datta-sampradāya* along with its various branches (among these, the important *Ānanda-sampradāya*) will develop as an ascetic and increasingly chauvinistic brāhmaṇical movement, with growing diffusion in urban environments and among the more intellectual, conservative Hindū *élites*.

There is thus no doubt that the *Guru-gītā*'s insertion reinforces the weight of the sacred, foundational text of the *Datta-sampradāya*. Within a regional narrative aimed at glorifying the lives of two historical *guru*-s, the addition of the holy *Guru-gītā* is instrumental in determining a series of equivalences: Śiva = Dattātreya = Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha &

⁵⁰ E. Zelliott, 'Introduction,' in Zelliott – Berntsen, *The Experience of Hinduism*, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

⁵¹ On the tendency towards a *śaiva-vaishṇava* synthesis in the Marāṭhī cultural area, see Ch. Vaudeville, 'The Shaiva-Vaishnava Synthesis in Maharashtrian Santism,' in K. Schomer – W. H. McLeod (eds.), *The Sants. Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1987), 215–228.

Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (Śrī Guru/Guru Nāth). Such a reinforcement via the *Guru-gītā*'s insertion may have possibly played a non negligible role in the movement's expansive phase, when the *saṃpradāya* started organizing itself at the main pilgrimage sites of Gāṇagāpūr, Narso-bāvādī, and Audumbar, gathering patronage and social support from the upper castes, and developing a network of alliances and affiliations. The proclamation of Gāṇagāpūr and its *saṃgama* as highest *tīrtha* and pilgrimage site in *adhyāya* 48 is functional to this objective. The equivalence Gāṇagāpūr = *Dattātreyā-puṇya-tīrtha* = Kāśī and Bhīmā-Amarajā = Prayāga, is a typical hagiographic device aimed at legitimating the *kṣetra* as the perfect paradigm of sanctity (*sarva-tīrtha*).⁵² The insertion of the *Guru-gītā* as *adhyāya* 49, near the very end of the *Guru-caritra*, serves the aim of extolling the masterly figure of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. The narration of the glory of Gāṇagāpūr's *tīrtha*-s in chapter 48 *cum* the recitation of the *Guru-gītā* in chapter 49 are texts which support and reinforce each other well. In other words, the insertion of the *Guru-gītā* precisely at this point of the *Guru-caritra* is not casual: it is meant to gloriously crown Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's descent unto earth, almost a kind of spiritual testament before his final 'great departure' (*mahā-prasthāna*) as described in the last 51st *adhyāya*.

In order to better appreciate such textual appropriation, it is not out of place to offer a short summary of the 48th *adhyāya* of the *Guru-caritra*, which immediately precedes the *Guru-gītā* chapter, as well as a summary of the two last *adhyāya*-s i.e. 50 and 51. After the detailed presentation in chapter 47 of a miracle of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī—who granted a poor peasant having full faith in him the grace of reaping a rich harvest when all surrounding fields were devastated by bad weather—in *adhyāya* 48 the central theme is Gāṇagāpūr's sanctity. It begins with the following question: why, asks Nāmdhārak to Siddhamuni, did Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī love this place so much to the point of electing it as his permanent abode? Moreover: what is the merit of Gāṇagāpūr, declared to be *Dattātreyā-puṇya-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of Dattātreyā's religious merit')? Siddhamuni answers by offering

⁵² On the ubiquitous notion of *sarva-tīrtha*, see Eck, *Banaras, op. cit.*, p. 144 and *passim*. For a recent study of various hagiographic models, with a rich and up-to-date bibliography, see F. Mallison (ed.), *Constructions hagiographiques dans le monde indien. Entre mythe et histoire* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études—Sciences historiques et philologiques, Tome 338, 2001).

the same explanations which were once given by Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī to these questions. The story which Siddhamuni recalls tells of a meeting of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī, Guru Nāth, with a group of devotees who had come to Gāṇagāpūr for the holiday of *āśvayuja bahula caturdaśī* (the fourteenth day of the dark half of the lunar month of *āśvina*, in September-October), preceding *dīpāvalī*.⁵³ Guru Nāth proposes to the group to embark on a pilgrimage to Kāśī, Gayā, and Prayāga (= Allāhābād, where the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā—and, according to myth, also the ancient Sarasvatī in an invisible form—merge).⁵⁴ The devotees, all thrilled at the idea, ask for permission to leave, so as to make provisions and organize themselves for the journey. But Guru Nāth, laughing, reveals to them that Kāśī, Gayā, and Prayāga are all already at hand precisely where they stand i.e. within the sacred *kṣetra* (lit. '[holy] land') of Gāṇagāpūr, and promises to show them the entire sacred site that very day. Thus, Guru Nāth leads them to the confluence of the Bhīmā with the Amarajā, proclaiming that *saṃgama* to be Prayāga. He then adds that, since here the river flows in the northern direction, the site is sacred as Kāśī itself. He proceeds to indicate eight holy *tīrtha*-s located all around the place. Of these, he says, not even the great snake bearing a thousand tongues Śeṣa or Ādiśeṣa (lit. 'Remainder', the cosmic serpent

⁵³ Lit. 'row of lights,' the popular festival of lights as symbol of good and of its victory over the powers of evil symbolized by darkness: it occurs during the lunar month of *kārttika* (October-November), on the fourteenth day of the waning moon.

⁵⁴ *Dharma*, in this dark age of *kalī*, is said to be based upon the four pillars of *tīrtha-kṣetra-vrata-dāna*: going to sacred fords and holy places, together with the performance of religious vows and the pious giving of alms. For a general introduction to the practice of pilgrimage to holy sites (*tīrtha-yātrā*), see A. Bharati, 'Pilgrimage in the Indian Tradition,' *History of Religions* 3 (1963): 135–167; S. M. Bhardwaj, *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India: A Study in Cultural Geography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); D. L. Eck, 'India's Tīrthas: "Crossings" in Sacred Geography,' *History of Religions* 20 (1981): 323–344. For a bibliography on pilgrimage, see Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–278, 281–282. For the relevance which the *saṃgama* has in the myths relative to Dattātreya, I may mention a tale narrated in the *Skanda Purāṇa* as well as in other *Purāṇa*-s concerning the great penances which the mother of Datta, Anasūyā (lit. 'the Non-envious,' wife of the ṛṣi Atri), performed at the confluence of the Narmadā with the Airaṇḍī. Very pleased with her arduous austerities, the *trimūrti* of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva consented to her wish that the three gods be born as her sons: so it was that Soma, Datta, and Durvāsas came into existence, 'descents' of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva respectively. On this episode, see S. V. Kumar, *The Paurāṇic Lore of Holy Water-places with Special Reference to Skanda Purāṇa* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), p. 68.

representing the infinite) would be able to adequately describe the power and the glory. Interestingly, these *tīrtha*-s are all clearly identifiable as *śaiva*. In this regard, it must be remembered that Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī—as the 12th *adhyāya* of the *Guru-caritra* informs us—was ordained in the *sarasvatī* branch of the Śāṅkara *daśanāmī* order of monks at the age of nine or ten years old.

The devotees then ask the master to please tell them the origin of the sacred river Amarajā. Guru Nāth reveals that it is thus described in the *Jalandhara Purāṇa*:⁵⁵ once upon a time, the demon (*asura*) Jalandhara succeeded in overwhelming all the gods. The *asura* was made invincible thanks to a mysterious power: if he was beheaded in battle, a new head would immediately spring up upon his neck; if a drop of blood was to fall on the ground, instantaneously from it a new demon would originate.⁵⁶ His army thus multiplied incessantly, overpowering that of the *deva*-s. It so happened that the gods were defeated and forced to abandon their heavenly abode. Then Indra, the king of the *deva*-s (*deva-rāja*), came to Śiva and told him all that had happened, praying him to save them. Śiva, moved by compassion, created for him a vessel containing the miraculous water *saṃjīvanī* (lit. ‘animating’, ‘enlivening’). He gave it to Indra saying that, if the water be sprinkled on the corpses of the *deva*-s who had died in battle, these would at once come back to life: in this way, the gods would certainly win against the demon. Now it so happened that, just when Indra was on his way carrying the vessel bearing the miraculous water, he inadvertently spilled⁵⁷ some of it upon

⁵⁵ Actually, no *Purāṇa* is known with this name. The story of Jalandhara, the mighty son of the Ocean who came to challenge Śiva and was ultimately killed by him, is narrated in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (*Rudra-saṃhitā*, *Yuddha-khaṇḍa*).

⁵⁶ The multiplication of demonic beings bursting out from spilled blood—the prime symbol of life and vital energy—is a recurring motif. One is here reminded of the well-known episode in which the goddess Kālī kills the demon Raktabīja, as narrated in *Devī-māhātmya* 88.52 ff. On this, see my article ‘Il sangue e la Dea nel contesto mitologico hindū,’ in A. Amadi (ed.), *Il sangue nel mito. Il sangue purificatore nel sacrificio del bufalo nell’Asia meridionale* (Venezia: Grafica L’Artigiana, 2002), 101–112.

⁵⁷ The motif of spilling or dropping a most precious substance is again a paradigmatic one. The most celebrated mythic tale is relative to the supposed origin of the popular *Kumbha-melā* festival: the gods and demons once fought a great battle for a pitcher (*kumbha*) containing the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). During the fight four drops of the precious nectar were spilt on the earth. These gave origin and fame to the holy towns of Allāhābād, (= Prayāga), Haridvāra, Nāsik, and Ujjayinī. On the *Kumbha-melā* festival, a tradition which dates back to at least 644 C.E. as

the earth. This water became the river Saṃjīvanī, which later came to be known as Amarajā (lit. 'Born from the immortal').

Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī underlines how taking a bath in the waters of this river at the time of solar or lunar eclipses, or even on full moon nights or at the time of *ekādaśī* (= the 11th day of the lunar calendar), is especially sanctifying and brings great merit. He also mentions other important *tīrtha*-s located around Gāṇagāpūr, among which the *manohara-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of the Stealer of minds' [= Śiva]; *manohara* is also a name of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's *pādukā*-s), the *āsvattha* tree (*Ficus religiosa*) not far from the main Dattātreyā temple, the *śaṅkara-bhuvana-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of the Benefactor of the world'; Śaṅkara being one of Śiva's most sacred names),⁵⁸ the *saṃgameśvara-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of the Lord of the confluence' [= Śiva]), and the *nandikeśvara-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of the Lord of Nandin', this latter one being the bull, Śiva's mighty vehicle).

At this point, Siddhamuni tells another anecdote narrated to the pilgrims by Guru Nāth. Once upon a time, there lived a *brāhmaṇa* named Gosvāmin, a very devout and pious man belonging to the Bhāradvāja *gotra*. He lived in the village of Nāgeśa, not far from Gāṇagāpūr. Perfectly detached from all worldly allurements, he spent his time absorbed in the contemplation of Śiva. Gosvāmin had two older brothers, Īśvara and Paṇḍuraṅga. One day, both his brothers planned to make a pilgrimage to Kāśī and invited Gosvāmin to come along with them. But Gosvāmin replied declaring that in Gāṇagāpūr only is the abode of Śrī Viśveśvara (lit. 'Lord of all'; the name of the '*liṅga*'⁵⁹ of light' or *jyotir-liṅga* which is venerated in Kāśī), and that Gāṇagāpūr is in fact Kāśī. His brothers, being totally unable to perceive the place's sanctity, asked him to offer proof of what he

certified by the Chinese buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, see D. K. Roy – I. Devi, *Kumbha. India's Ageless Festival* (Bombay, 1955).

⁵⁸ The name *śaṅkara* is found in the invocation known as *Śrī-rudra*, which for all *śaiva*-s is the ideal center of the *Veda*-s. The formula *śaṅkarāya namaḥ*—'Adoring salutations be paid to the Benefactor'—precedes the famous *śivāya namaḥ*, the solemn five-syllabled spell (*pañcākṣara-mantra*); see *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* 9.1.1.41.

⁵⁹ The sacred *liṅga* (lit. 'mark,' 'sign') is the symbol of phallic origin representing Śiva in all of his temples, as a smooth cylindrical shaft set on a pedestal. In śaivism, the most sacred *liṅga*-s are twelve and one of these is precisely the *viśveśvara-liṅga*. On the cosmic symbology and iconography of the *liṅga*, which is truly the mark of Śiva's transcendence, see T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras, 1914–1916), vol. 2, pp. 39–102.

affirmed. Then Gosvāmin prayed to Śiva asking him to manifest all the *tīrtha*-s of Kāśī in that very spot, so that his brothers could have a clear vision of them and convince themselves of the greatness of Gāṇagāpūr. Immediately, the *mūrti* of Śiva Viśveśvara was seen coming out of one of the nearby water pools (*kuṇḍa*). Following this, they saw the waters of the Bhagīrathī (one of the Ganges' epithets,⁶⁰ from the name of the ascetic-king Bhagīratha who obtained its descent from the sky unto earth) oozing out from a spring. The two brothers, overwhelmed with emotion, could thus contemplate with their very eyes all the Kāśī *tīrtha*-s in holy Gāṇagāpūr.

To the convened pilgrims, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī describes then in some detail the sanctity of the *saṃgama-mahimā-tīrtha* (lit. 'the great ford of the confluence [of the Bhīmā with the Amarajā]'), not at all inferior to that of Kāśī. From there, he leads the devotees to the *pāpa-vināśinī-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford which annihilates sin'), located a few miles away, and explains the merit to be derived from taking a bath in that holy spot. He solemnly declares that the waters of the *pāpa-vināśinī-tīrtha* have the power of purifying the embodied soul (*jīva*) from all sins accumulated in previous births, and concludes by proclaiming once again that Gāṇagāpūr is indeed Kāśī.

Siddhamuni proceeds to extol the greatness of the *pāpa-vināśinī-tīrtha* to Nāmdhārak by narrating another short story in the life of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. Guru Nāth had a younger sister, Ratnāī by name. Due to a sin she had committed in her previous life, she had contracted leprosy. Her sin is thus described: a female cat once gave birth to five kittens inside a kitchen vessel. The woman, being unaware of the presence of the newborn kittens, poured some water in the vessel and started boiling it. As a consequence, all kittens died a horrible death. Precisely because of this fault, Ratnāī had to suffer leprosy in her present life. Terribly afflicted, she went to her brother praying him that he free her from her illness. Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī first reminded her of the sin she had committed, though inadvertently, in her previous life. Then, moved by compassion by seeing the sister's great pain and intense devotion, he instructed her to go to the *pāpa-vināśinī-tīrtha* and to reside there for some time, bathing

⁶⁰ For an appreciation of the Ganges' rich and complex mythology, see S. Piano, *Il mito del Gange (Gangā-māhātmya)*. Con una prefazione di Mario Piantelli (Torino: Promolibri, 1990).

daily in its holy waters. She obeyed his command and was soon cured of leprosy.

The narration continues with Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī taking the pilgrims to the *koṭi-tīrtha* (lit. 'the lofty ford'), of which he magnifies the greatness. He then takes them to the *rudrapāda-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of the foot of Rudra' i.e. Śiva), which he equates for merit and power to the *tīrtha* of Gayā. From there, Guru Nāth leads the group to other holy places, such as the temple of Kāleśvara—perhaps the oldest in Gāṇagāpūr—and the *manmatha-tīrtha* (lit. 'the ford of love' or 'the ford of Kāma', Eros personified). He invites all pilgrims to perform the ablutions (*abhiṣeka*) to the idol of Kāleśvara (lit. 'Lord of time': a name of Śiva as well as of a *liṅga* celebrated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*)⁶¹ during the entire lunar month of *śravana* (July-August), and to dedicate themselves to the deity's cult through the offerings of lights (*dīpārādhana*) in the lunar month of *kārttika* (October-November). In this way, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī explained to them in detail the power and the glory of Gāṇagāpūr and of all its eight, wondrous *tīrtha*-s (*aṣṭa-tīrtha*): this, in sum, the contents of the *Guru-caritra*'s 48th *adhyāya*.

After the *Guru-gītā* chapter, the 50th *adhyāya* illustrates the merit which may be derived from visiting saints (*mahā-puruṣa-saṃdarśana*): a Muslim *navāb* of the kingdom of Bīdar—who in his previous life had been a poor Hindū washerman devoted to Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha, now reborn into a royal family thanks to the latter's blessings—is afflicted by a painful ulcer that no doctor is able to cure. He is then advised to seek the *darśana* of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. After meeting the saint he is miraculously cured from his illness and finally, again thanks to Guru Nāth's grace, he attains liberation. It is noteworthy how in the *Guru-caritra* several miracles of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī are aimed at helping as well as impressing Muslim rulers of the Deccan sultanates. The equanimity and religious universalism attributed to this Muslim king devoted to Guru Nāth are especially stressed: a trait which—despite the intolerant⁶² brāhmaṇical revivalism characterizing the

⁶¹ Śrī Mahākāleśvara is the name of the *jyotiṛ-liṅga* venerated in the Mālava region, in Ujjayinī, along the river Śīpā in Madhya Pradesh.

⁶² Also in recent times, there have been cases of open clash between brāhmaṇical circles devoted to Datta and the untouchable community (and one should here remember that starting from 1955, the *Untouchability (Offences) Act* has made the practice of untouchability illegal). For a well documented instance relative to the seventies of the past century, see K. Saptarshi (trans. M. Berntsen), 'Orthodoxy and

Datta-sampradāya—is present in several saintly figures who are assimilated to this tradition, whose biography and teaching are highly eclectic mixing a Hindū background with Islāmic elements and vice-versa⁶³ (in modern times, one is here reminded of the charismatic figure of the Sāi Bābā of Śirdī (d. 15 October, 1918),⁶⁴ who is venerated as an *avatāra* of Dattātreyā by hundreds of thousands of followers and whose official biography/hagiography, the *Śrī-sāi-satcarita*,⁶⁵ imitates the *Guru-caritra* model). As K. V. R. Rao synthesizes with reference to the Muslim *navāb*:

Human Rights: The Story of a Clash' in Zelliott – Berntsen, *The Experience of Hinduism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 251–263. Timothy Lubin of the Washington and Lee University has studied the politico-religious connections of the *Datta-sampradāya*, especially with the more conservative brāhmanical sectors. In the contemporary Marāṭhī context, he has examined the reconfiguration of a peculiar form of 'Vedic' ritual, which has been rendered palatable to a Westernized and rationalist Hindū middle class. On this significant issue, see his article 'Science, Patriotism, and Mother Veda: Ritual Activism in Maharashtra,' from which I quote the abstract: 'Over two decades, a holy man from eastern Maharashtra (Marathwada) has made it his mission to reestablish the archaic, multi-fire Vedic sacrificial system as an important element in public religious life in India. Drawing his inspiration from Dayananda Saraswati's idealized and abstract vision of Veda as the original and pure piety, this 'saint', Ranganath Selukar Maharaj, innovates in his attempt to revive the full Vedic *shrauta* sacrificial cult (minus the animal victims) as a vehicle for unifying and re-empowering Hindus—religiously, socially, and politically—whose culture and society has been weakened by centuries of 'foreign' rule. Simultaneously evoking Vedantic renunciant ideals, Maharashtrian regional bhakti traditions, and nationalist heroism (citing Selukar's participation in the movement to liberate Marathwada from the Muslim state of Hyderabad in the late forties), his movement has been effective in attracting support from a range of social groups through the annual multi-week Vedic festivals he organizes. While his revival of priestly ritual vividly affirms the value of traditional piety, he argues that the ritual is essentially scientific and rational, and will have salutary effects on Hindu society, the Indian state, and the natural environment. This combined appeal to prestigious, pan-Indian traditional authority, regional sympathies, and scientific rationalism, all articulated both in preaching and in print, and dramatized by spectacular public acts of piety, seems calculated to persuade the educated and professional middle castes (a sort of middle class) while repackaging archaic Brahmanical ritual in a way that appeals also to an illiterate, rural clientele' (<http://home.wlu.edu/~ubint/AAS2000.htm>).

⁶³ On this subject, see N. K. Wagle, 'Hindu-Muslim Interactions in Medieval Maharashtra,' in G. D. Sontheimer – H. Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), pp. 51–66.

⁶⁴ For an introduction to the Sāi Bābā of Śirdī, among modern saints certainly the most beloved and popular all across the Indian subcontinent, see my monograph *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993). More recently, see M. Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma: Shirdi Sai Baba in the Light of Sufism* (New Delhi: Sterling Paperbacks, 1999).

⁶⁵ The full text has been translated into English. See G. R. Dabholkar (Hemad Pant), *Shri Sai Satcharita. The Life and Teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba*. Translated from the Original Marāṭhī by Indira Kher (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1999).

When he became the ruler, he was very kind to all the subjects, treating the Hindus and the Muslims alike and all the subjects as his own children. He used to respect brahmins very much. The Maulwis [= holders of Islāmic religious instruction; 'ālim, mullāh] used to feel envious and jealous of this. They tried to turn him against the Hindus, but the king never heeded them. He was very spiritual-minded and believed that all the religions—even so Hinduism and Islam—are but different pathways to the same God. He firmly believed all the Hindu Gods are but different facets of the same Allah and that the various idols and forms which Hindus worship are but an aid for purifying and to bring the mind to one-pointedness, which ultimately leads to the experience and realisation of the Formless—The Nirakara, The Allah concept of Islam. He was trying to establish harmony and cordiality in the relationship between the two religious communities. By and large, he was loved equally by both the communities among his subjects.⁶⁶

The last *adhyāya* of the *Guru-charitra*, the 51st, describes the circumstances of the 'great departure' (*mahā-prasthāna*) or death of Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī: this would have taken place in the lunar month of *māgha* (January-February) of 1458 (*śaka* 1380). In the imminence of the end

⁶⁶ Rao, *Guru Charitra*, *op. cit.*, p. 154. In southern Kārṇāṭaka, a paradigm of such eclecticism—which in recent times has generated tensions and violences between the Hindū and Muslim communities—is the mountainous locale (around 2,000 meters high) of Bābā Budhan Gīrī in the Chikmagalur District, venerated as a pilgrimage site by both religious communities. Here, inside a cave, the Muslims honor the tomb of saint Bābā Budhan (also known as Ḥazrāt Dāda Ḥayat Mīr Qalandar or Bābā Qalandar Shāh Dattātreya), whereas Hindūs venerate the cave itself as the 'seat' (*pīṭha*) of Dattātreya. Indeed, the Hindūs believe that Dattātreya 'disappeared' from human sight precisely by entering the narrow mouth of this cave (such belief may be compared with the narration of the *Śaṅkara-vijaya-vīlāsa*, which tells of how Dattātreya appeared in Badarīnātha and, holding Śaṅkara by the hand, took him in a nearby cave from which they were never seen to come out: the motif of the entrance in a cave is often utilized to signify death). The Hindū devotees from Mysore believe that one day Dattātreya will reemerge out from the cave of Bābā Budhan Gīrī: this will be his last manifestation, since they worship Dattātreya as the final *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the eschatological one. This peculiar theology coexists with the belief, universally held in the *Datta-sampradāya*, that Dattātreya is an immortal and eternal *avatāra*, invisible but just to a few and yet constantly present and operating in the world. On this interesting case, see A. Bharati, *Great Tradition and Little Traditions: Indological Investigations in Cultural Anthropology* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies Vol. XCVI, 1978), 68–71; A. Bharati, *Hindu Views and Ways and the Hindu-Muslim Interface: An Anthropological Assessment* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), 78–79; J. Assayag, *Au confluent de deux rivières. Musulmans et hindous dans le Sud de l'Inde* (Paris: Presses de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Monographies, n. 181, 1995), 115–118.

he sets out from Gāṇagāpūr leaving there his *nirguṇa-pādukā*-s, having infused into them his eternal presence and power. In the *Guru-caritra*, the reason why Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī decides to leave Gāṇagāpūr is justified by the fact that after the miracle of curing the *navāb* always more crowds—even of Muslims!—were pouring into the village, thus upsetting (and certainly also ‘polluting’, from a Hindū point of view) its traditional atmosphere of serenity and silence. As an *avatāra* of Datta, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī promises to all devotees that he will eternally reside in his ‘invisible form’ in Gāṇagāpūr and in its *aṣṭa-tīrtha*-s, and that he will always be present everywhere his name is remembered with faith in prayer (*smaraṇa*) and song (*bhajana*, *kīrtana*). Then, together with his four most intimate disciples—Sāyaṇdev, Kaviśvar Nandi, Narahari Kavi and Siddhamuni—he proceeds on foot towards the Kadalī Van (a banana tree grove) on the banks of the Pātāla Gaṅgā (= the Gaṅgā of the lowest region of the hells, the name by which the river Kṛṣṇā is here popularly known), at the foot of the sacred Śrīśailam mountain in Āndhra Pradesh.⁶⁷ That Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī selected this celebrated locale as his last earthly residence, where Śiva Mallikārjuna is worshipped in the most sacred form of the ‘*liṅga* of light’ (*jyotir-liṅga*), is not without significance. It is meant to once again highlight the *śaiva* affiliation of this Datta *avatāra*. Having reached the Kadalī Van, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī has his disciples prepare a small raft made with the trunks and leaves of banana trees. The raft, decorated with flowers, is then launched in the river’s waters: on top of it, the master solemnly sits in the lotus yogic posture (*padmāsana*). After magnifying the religious merit which is to be derived from reading the *Guru-caritra* and again reassuring his pupils of his constant, active presence amongst them and in Gāṇagāpūr, Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī mysteriously vanishes from sight. As a token of his grace and as a sign of his reaching the ‘other shore’ of the eternal abode, the four disciples, as promised by Guru Nāth, each receive a beautiful fragrant flower (*prasāda-puṣpa*), which comes to them miraculously moving against the current on the water’s surface.

⁶⁷ On this locale, see A. V. Shankaranarayana Rao, *Temples of Andhra Pradesh* (Bangalore: Vasana Publications, 2001), 73–77. See also Ch. Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 107, 109, 133, 271–272 n. 31.

Especially revealing is Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī's underlining of how the importance of his words will be effectively understood only by those spiritual aspirants who are devout to the *guru* and to *God* in equal measure, that is, who make *no distinction* between the two: precisely this is the spirit of the whole *Guru-caritra* and also the essential reason for its appropriation of the Sanskrit *Guru-gītā*. Coming back to our short poem, and keeping in mind its place and context within the *Guru-caritra*, it can be concluded that only the yogic adept who constantly 'plunges' himself/herself into the sacred waters of the *Guru-gītā* is to be viewed as a true *jñānin* or sage. The *Guru-gītā* is therefore to be understood as highest, spiritual 'crossing', a veritable *tīrtha* (with Gāṇagāpūr as its 'material' counterpart) leading to final release (*mokṣa*) by cutting the fetters which enchain one to *saṃsāra*.

These remarks lead me to a consideration of the social as well as political 'weight' of the *guru*. The very concrete, tangible worldly power—primarily understood as the ability to exercise control and authority over people—which the spiritual master, typically male, has widely held at all times in Indian history. Too often these themes have been utterly neglected by indologists. Ideally, to be sure, most *guru*-s and certainly all renunciants are by brāhmaṇical law considered to have entered an *a-varṇa* or 'caste-less' state, that is, to have died to the world and its poisonous allurements, living a life of poverty depending on alms, always absorbed in the contemplation of the Absolute.⁶⁸ This ideal of simplicity, selfless dispassion and pure love towards all beings has been upheld and lived out by hosts of solitary *yogin*-s, ascetics, *sādhu*-s, and *guru*-s over the centuries: it is certainly not my intention to deny this. Even in the case of those saintly figures who have renounced the world, nonetheless, the issue of power is always present. Most often, as a 'divine' might over nature and things—and people as well!—which takes the form of the miraculous, of the wondrous sign (*camatkāra*) that the holy person operates (for instance, through healing), of which all hagiographies are replete. The theme of power in its vast and diversified

⁶⁸ On the ideal, normative features of brāhmaṇical asceticism, see P. Olivelle, *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995). By the same author, see also *Śaṃnyāsa Upaniṣads. Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation*. Translated and with an Introduction by Patrick Olivelle (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

potential of expression is constitutive of the *guru* or saint: devotees believe it to be an intrinsic and irreplaceable component of his divine charisma.⁶⁹ A *yogin* or *guru* who lacked power (*śakti*) would not be considered a true *yogin* or *guru*. The latter is thus always expected to act powerfully, to use his powers in a performative, often spectacular way. Of course, it is also common opinion that the holy man may misuse his powers if misled by his ego, by the re-emergence of his pride and greedy attachments. If this happens (and it does happen!), he is thought to eventually lose his powers and fall back to an ordinary, human condition (one is here reminded of the often-mentioned case of the misuse of *siddhi*-s or 'supernatural attainments' by the immature *yogin*). However, an ethical judgement on how the *guru* utilizes his various powers is obviously not in discussion here: the master being revered as the repository and receptacle of divine power, what *must* interest the scholar is the *guru*'s utilization of power *in se*.

It would therefore be misleading and naive not to consider the focal issue of the exercise of the *guru*'s 'potency', especially in its social, even political expressions. First of all, as I have already hinted, the discourse of power is tangibly exercised with respect to the master's disciples and acolytes, both in the monastic milieu (the *āśrama*) as well as in the secular sphere. As the *Guru-gītā* evidences in its ideal representation, the *guru*'s power over the adepts is constantly celebrated in an overall perspective of devotion, service, and obedience, which amounts to psychological and often even material, economical dependence and subservience. The great majority of devotees remain stuck at this first stage, never being able to transcend their utter dependence upon the *guru*'s personal charisma, who then becomes a veritable cult-object. The following steps leading to an interiorization and universalization of the '*guru* principle,' eventually opening up to a condition of autonomy, independence, and freedom—material and psychological as well as spiritual—are restricted to a happy few: the religious *virtuosi*, the great *yogin*-s and *jīvanmukta*-s, who often become *guru*-s in turn. Thus, for the vast majority of the adepts

⁶⁹ On the issue of the saint's power and charisma, especially relevant is the discussion in L. A. Babb, *Redemptive Encounters*, *op. cit.* See also V. Dalmia and others (eds.), *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

there derives a radical form of personal dependence upon the *guru*'s 'name and form' (*nāma-rūpa*). Ideally, the master should guide the disciple to a condition of autonomy and responsibility. Having realized that there is only *brahman*, the *guru* should incarnate the paradigm of perfect detachment and selflessness, being intent on nothing else but the good of his *śiṣya*-s. This notwithstanding, the fact remains that the power of the *guru* over his disciples is truly immense. These latter ones are called to honor and serve him in all possible ways, consecrating their whole lives to him and executing all his commands, even if the master should appear to behave in manners which the disciple does not understand or even approve of. As we have seen, according to brāhmanical ideology the *guru* is equal to God and, actually, even superior to Him. His charisma over the people is enormous and, as a consequence, great risks of potential abuses ensue. Indeed, the *guru* or pseudo-*guru*, may be (and often is) tempted to misuse the tremendous power he has over the lives—and material substances—of his disciples. Paradoxical as it may appear for one who is recognized as the incarnation of detachment and selflessness, the subtle link between knowledge, power, and economic interests has been and continues to be inextricably tied to the authority of the 'divine' *guru*. Significantly he continues to be venerated as a 'great king' (*mahā-rāja*) to whom regal honors are to be paid. As David Smith has noted:

The Shankaracharya of Kanchi was seated on a throne while he was showered with 200 kilos of gold coins on his hundredth birthday in 1993. On his silver throne, Sathya Sai Baba sits above the prime minister and president of India when they share a platform. . . . The comparison with 'secular monarchies' is appropriate and significant: gurus do set up spiritual kingdoms.⁷⁰

Historically, the ideal separation between life-in-the-world (established on caste norms of subordination and domination) and the spiritual 'renunciatory' realm (*saṃnyāsa*)—though recognizably maintained by an *élite* of saints and mystics—has been often illusory or at least a blurred one. Contrary to the stereotyped image of the *āśrama* as an oasis of peace and non-violence where *guru*-s and *saṃnyāsin*-s dedicate themselves to meditation in view of *mokṣa*, it is proven that

⁷⁰ D. Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

many of these ascetics were at the same time clever dealers and also fierce warriors.⁷¹ The ideal, radical dichotomy between the worldly sphere and the renunciatory realm is, in fact, constantly contradicted, with trespassings in both directions. In modern times, for instance, the *śaiva* Gosain-s and the *vaiṣṇava* Bairāgī-s exercised a relevant economic as well as political influence as merchants (even as bankers) and renunciant-soldiers. The murderous violence of these figures is widely attested to in the chronicles. It was from around the 16th century that the main Hindū sects created within themselves sections of warrior ascetics, often utilized in an anti-Islāmic function but also in intersectarian combats (*śaiva*-s against *vaiṣṇava*-s, etc.). In the 18th century, these sections came to be organized in well-equipped regiments, such as the army of the Nāga *saṁnyāsīn*-s.⁷² It will be the troops of the British colonial army which, for the first time, will 'tame' these cohorts of renunciant-soldiers, of politicized *sādhu*-s and wandering ascetics, perceived as a dangerous and seditious element especially given their successful role as catalytic agents of the Hindū masses. The annihilation of these special armies was an essential task of the British in their effort to politically control and administer the country, first of all in order to collect the taxes over land property. The British enterprise was crowned with success. In a sense, the representation of the Indian saint itself came to be modified, since now only the traditional and ideal one was to be confirmed and upheld i.e. that of *guru*-s and ascetics exclusively dedicated to the practice of severe penances and meditation.

The *Pax britannica* will lead many *guru*-s and religious institutions to seek new roles and identities in order to redefine and reaffirm their intellectual, socio-economical, and even political stature. This

⁷¹ On the *āśrama* and the *liaison* between religion and politics, see the essay by J. Assayag, *L'Inde. Désir de nation* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001), 221–257. On this same subject, see also G. J. Larson, *India's Agony Over Religion* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995).

⁷² On this often neglected issue, see W. R. Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). By the same author, see 'Soldier Monk and Militant Sadhus,' in D. Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu. Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). Especially insightful is the essay by V. Bouillier, 'La violence des non-violents ou les ascètes au combat,' In D. Vidal – G. Tarabout – É. Meyer (eds.), *Violences et non-violences en Inde* (Paris: Éditions de L'Ehess [Coll. *Puruṣārtha* 16], 1994), 213–243 (with excellent bibliography).

will be done either by cultivating a reformist attitude open to Western ideologies and values, following the moderate stance of the Congress movement (as in the politics of a 'father of the Indian nation' such as G. K. Gokhale; this will also be the typical response of many sects and groups of the so-called neo-hinduism who honor in Rāmmohan Roy (1772–1833), founder of the *Brāhmo Samāj*, their seminal leader), or else by taking a resolute anti-Western and more aggressive, even violent position, upholding an anachronistic return to the supposed purity and order of ancient, brāhmaṇical India (one is here reminded of the politics of a leader such as B. G. Tīlak, who, as one of his models, elected the 17th century saint Rāmdās, *guru* and counsellor of the valiant anti-Islāmic hero Śivājī).

Nowadays, *guru*-s are often referred to as 'god-men' and the most famous among them have been transformed by the State itself into icons of national, traditional heritage and culture. Spirituality being typically presented as India's 'trademark'—via the neo-hindū *sanātana-dharma* essentialization—many contemporary *āśrama*-s, temples, and *guru* dwellings (*sthāna*-s) are openly publicized by the national Departments of Tourism as 'paradises in miniature', thus making the visit/pilgrimage to these sites—by groups of Westerners as well as by the Westernized Indian urban middle-classes—an increasingly lucrative business.⁷³ 'Spiritual economy' sells extremely well, and thus this kind of consumer outlook and management has become more and more organized and prosperous, being regulated according to market laws. Even the *darśana*, or the 'vision' of the deity or divine master—so important in traditional Indian culture—is nowadays more and more spectacularized and eventually 'de-localized' through the utilization of the powerful new media of our 'image society' (via TV, videos, movies, the Internet, etc.).⁷⁴

A fundamental aspect is represented by the network of donations and patronages which constitutes the concrete link between donors/

⁷³ On the business of spirituality and its link with tourism, see A. G. Gold, *Fruitful Journeys: The Way of Rajasthani Pilgrims* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); B. N. Ramusak, 'The Indian Princes as Fantasy: Palace Hotels, Palace Museums, and Palace on Wheels,' in C. A. Breckenridge (ed.), *Consuming Modernity. Public Culture in Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 151–179.

⁷⁴ On the contemporary religious discourse through the use of media, see L. A. Babb – S. S. Wadley (eds.), *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997 [1st ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995]).

devotees and the *guru* and *āśrama* organization. The properties of the *āśrama*-s are either in the sole name of the *guru* or else controlled by boards of trustees. Depending on the *guru*'s and his entourage's entrepreneurial capacities, the profits gained allow the expanding of such spiritual centers and the re-investment of at least part of these substances in order to enlarge the *āśrama* influence and reputation, for instance through the offering of social services (*sevā*) to the local communities, such as through the building of schools, hospitals, temples, etc. Usually, the *guru* promotes his leadership through monthly bulletins, sectarian literature, Internet websites, etc. often in more than one Indian regional language and typically in both Hindī as well as English. Through these and other channels, more branches or centers of the movement affiliated to the sanctuary where the *guru* resides are created, both in India as well as in the Indian diaspora and the Western world. This determines a veritable competition among *āśrama*-s and *guru*-s.

In time, the gathering of more disciples and, consequently, of more economic wealth, determines a network of alliances, of reciprocal favors and honors or 'enhancement of status' between the *guru*-God and regional and sometimes even national businessmen and politicians. It's the 'big man' strategy, as the anthropologist M. Mines has called it (1989), applying this originally Melanesian notion to the context of the Indian subcontinent.⁷⁵ Being a generous donor, for instance by patronizing sacrificial rites or festivals, is a powerful way to achieve public recognition as a virtuous religious person and also to demonstrate one's economic power. The donor is said to offer the *guru dakṣiṇā* i.e. the ancient 'sacrificial salary' which was due to the priest materially executing the sacrifice (*yajña*). In exchange, the *guru* generously bestows public praises and blessings upon the donor, thus elevating the latter's status by allowing the person to 'participate'—at least to some extent—in his other-worldly, divine charisma, which is supposed to 'rub off' on him or her.⁷⁶ In a spiral of reci-

⁷⁵ See M. Mines – V. Gourishankar, 'Religion and Big-Man Politics in South India: Towards Re-conceptualizing Indian Society' (Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1989); see also M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

⁷⁶ On this exchange, see my article 'Women and Ritual: The Experience of a Contemporary Marāṭhī Āśram,' *Annali di Napoli* 53, fasc. 3 (1993): 279–302.

procal favors enhancing each other's power/status and authority (sometimes leading to cases of veritable corruption), the *guru* more often than not comes to resemble or even act as a political leader.

The constant reconfiguration and renegotiation of the complex ties between religion and politics which has taken place in Indian history, has seen the *āśrama* and the *guru* as crucial protagonists (in the absence of any institutionalized, centralized Church). In modern times, one is reminded of the peculiar role of a leader such as M. K. Gāndhī (1869–1948), emblematic representative of the reformist, neo-hindū ideology vouching for the ideals—strongly influenced by Western and Christian values—of non-violence, inclusivistic universalism, and tolerance (along the lines of Svāmin Vivekānanda, the great advocate of neo-hindū reformism at the *World's Parliament of Religions* held in Chicago in 1893). A politically moderate response, strongly if not decisively influenced by Western values, will for the most part characterize the Congress Party's ideology even during the period of J. Nehru's leadership. Precisely the neo-Vedānta form of spirituality, with an emphasis on devotion (*bhakti*) and social service (*sevā*) as well as on a variety of meditative practices (*sādhana*), will become the typical form of religion i.e. the 'hinduism' of the Westernized urban Hindū middle-classes. Starting from around the second half of the 19th century, this modernized, 'sanitized' form of Hindū religiosity—with the *guru* as its core figure—will be successfully 'exported' to the Western world, creating a most intriguing and complex 'hermeneutic circle' between India and Europe.⁷⁷

By the same token, one must underline the importance of the Hindū 'religious right' in the Indian modern and contemporary political arena, especially after the traumatic experience of partition (1947): the many ways—often aggressive and militant, for the sake of an assumed *hindutva* animated by a strong anti-Islāmic (as well as anti-Western) component—in which a variety of renouncers and ascetics belonging to different *śākhā*-s and *akhārā*-s, head of monasteries, etc.

⁷⁷ On this crucial issue, see W. Halbfass, *India and Europe. An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988); E. Franco – K. Preisendanz (eds.), *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies* (Amsterdam – Atlanta, Ga: Rodopi, 1997), especially pp. 489–514. By W. Halbfass, see also 'La scoperta indiana dell'Europa' in E. Fizzotti – F. Squarcini, *L'Oriente che non tramonta. Movimenti religiosi di origine orientale in Italia* (Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1999), 19–27.

have actively *engaged* themselves in the politics of the Indian nationalist movement even prior to the Gāndhī era and then *contra* Gāndhī and the Congress Party (as in the case of the *Ārya Samāj*, founded in 1875 by Svāmin Dayānanda Sarasvatī, up to the contemporary developments with the *Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh*—founded in 1925—the *Vishva Hindu Parishad*—founded in 1964—and the *Bharatiya Janata Party*⁷⁸—founded in 1980). The emblematic anti-Gāndhī figure who fostered communal hatred in the name of the purity of the Hindū race/caste⁷⁹ and who elaborated the very notion of *hindutva*⁸⁰ calling for ‘the hindūization of politics and the militarization of hindūism’, is V. D. Savarkār (1883–1966). The violent actions of these fundamentalist Hindū groups especially against the Muslim community—such as in the conflicts in Bombay in 1982, or in the terrible bloodshed which occurred in the supposed capital and ‘birth-place’ of the *avatāra* Rāma in Ayodhyā, culminating in the destruction of the Babri *masjid* and the slaughters perpetrated in Surat, Gujarāt (December 1992)—are all cases in point: important *guru*-s and brāhmaṇical religious leaders have played a major role in actively instigating the Hindū masses against the Muslim minority. Especially after the 1960es, as Jackie Assayag cogently points out:

An increased number of politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen, as well as of professional and interest groups—who were favorable to the political uses of religious ideology and who were consequently loyal to it—have compromised themselves with organizations led by all sorts of renunciants and gurus. Some of these gurus were very powerful since they descended from prestigious lineages in charge of very old monasteries. Others were powerful because they ruled over empires of devotion functioning as enterprises of fund raising. Others were also powerful since, at the vanguard of religious renewal, they introduced

⁷⁸ On India’s recent receptivity to the right-wing Hindū nationalist party, see Ch. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst, 1996); T. B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave. Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). See also A. Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism. Religion, Modernity, and Secularization* (London – New York: Verso, 1997).

⁷⁹ On the notion of race and the caste system, see Ch. Jaffrelot, ‘The Idea of the Human Race in the Writings of Hindu Nationalist Ideologues in the 1920s and 1930s: A Concept Between Two Cultures,’ in P. Robb (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁸⁰ V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?* (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1969 [1st ed. 1924]).

ideas and practices in both spirituality and social relations which were more attuned to the aspirations of the new middle classes—let us think, for instance, of the expansion of the Svaminarayan sect hailing from Gujarat or to the international Hare Krishna movement.⁸¹

Moreover:

After the 1980s, the Hindu nationalist program dominates the public debate. (...) The material and economic profits obtained thanks to the support of gurus and to the networks of their organizations are more important today than they were in the four decades which followed independence. (...) The gurus—fake or authentic—by now as powerful as trade unions (of “deliverance”), have thus become key actors in the world of business and of the politics of spirituality, upon which the official ideology of the State willingly draws.⁸²

Unfortunately, the overall attention of indologists on these economical and political dimensions has been scant up to very recent times. In the consideration of India's *guru* figures, the field of indology has been dominated by a romantic, essentialist bias (as represented by the ideal, utopic setting of the *āśrama* as depicted in the Hindū brāhmaṇical tradition) and by an almost exclusive attention paid to texts and philological issues or to the more experiential, mystical dimensions of religious life. Only in the last one or two decades the awareness and interest of scholars (most notably anthropologists and sociologists) for the *guru*-s' implication in in-worldly, socio-economic

⁸¹ 'Un nombre accru de politiciens, de bureaucrates, d'hommes d'affaires et de groupes professionnels ou d'intérêts, qui étaient favorables aux usages politiques de l'idéologie religieuse et au loyalisme subséquent, se sont compromis avec des organisations conduites par toutes les espèces de renonçants et de gourous. Certains, très puissants parce qu'ils descendaient de lignages prestigieux dirigeant des monastères fort anciens; d'autres parce qu'ils régnaient sur des empires de dévotion qui fonctionnaient comme des entreprises de collecte de fonds; quelques-uns enfin parce que, à la pointe du renouveau religieux, ils avaient introduit des idées et des pratiques dans la spiritualité et les relations sociales plus conformes aux aspirations des nouvelles classes moyennes—pensons, par exemple, au développement de la secte Svaminarayan à partir du Gujarat, ou à celle, internationale, des Hare Krishna.' Assayag, *L'Inde. Désir de nation*, op. cit., p. 246.

⁸² 'Depuis les années 1980, le programme nationaliste hindou domine le débat public. (...) Les profits matériels et économiques obtenus grâce au soutien de gourous et grâce aux réseaux de leurs organisations sont plus importants aujourd'hui qu'ils ne le furent dans le quatre décennies qui suivirent l'indépendance. (...) Les gourous—faux ou authentiques—désormais aussi puissants que des syndicats (de la 'délivrance'), sont ainsi devenus des acteurs clés dans le monde des affaires et de la politique de la spiritualité, dans laquelle puise encore volontiers l'idéologie officielle de l'État.' *Ibid.*, pp. 246–247.

and political matters—the so-called ‘divine enterprise’—has grown, especially focused on India’s modern and contemporary situation.⁸³ The purported other-worldly domain of the *guru*-God is more often than not a pure illusion, being instead related to very mundane and ego-centered concerns. The ideological ground is that of brāhmaṇical orthodoxy as sanctioned in *dharma-śāstric* codes: the overall religious discourse is constitutively a power discourse, as it is evidenced by the dominant hierarchy of the caste system, perpetuating conditions of radical, structural inequality.⁸⁴ In this regard, one cannot but recall—on the left-side of the political arena—the figure of B. R. Ambedkār (1891–1956), the famous leader of the ‘untouchables’ and an ‘untouchable’ himself, who all his life fought against the caste system.⁸⁵ He detested the priestly brāhmaṇical system as well as all things Hindū, considered as the root-cause of evil. Even the moderate, paternalistic ‘neo-hindūism’ of Gāndhī was envisioned by him as perpetuating discrimination and the tragedy of inequality. He was indeed one of Gāndhī’s major critics. His anti-brāhmaṇism eventually brought him to embrace Buddhism: just before dying, he led a mass conversion to Buddhism of thousands of untouchables in the town of Nāgpur, in Mahārāṣṭra. The social phenomenon of neo-Buddhism, a movement which nowadays counts about six million adherents, owes its existence precisely to Ambedkār’s anti-Hindū revolt and protest. Even in such a case, the intersection and different instrumental uses of religion and politics over the issue of power, in a struggle to either perpetuate hierarchical inequality (via brāhmaṇism) or, viceversa, to annihilate it (via Buddhism) is most revealing.

⁸³ See L. McKean, *Divine Enterprise. Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement* (Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also the review article to this book by Assayag, ‘L’économie politique de la spiritualité: renoncement et nationalisme chez les gourous hindous depuis les années 1980,’ *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ For an English translation of the *Mānava-dharma-śāstra*, perhaps the most authoritative of brāhmaṇical legal codes, see W. Doniger – B. K. Smith (trans.), *The Laws of Manu* (London: Penguin, 1991). On *dharma* literature, see P. Olivelle (trans.), *Dharmasūtras. The Law Codes of Ancient India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). On the religious discourse as power discourse, see S. Pollock, ‘From Discourse of Ritual to Discourse of Power in Sanskrit Culture,’ *Journal of Ritual Studies* 2 (1990): 315–345. By the same author, see also ‘Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj,’ in C. A. Breckenridge – P. van Der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 76–133.

⁸⁵ For an appraisal of Ambedkār’s figure, see Ch. Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar. Leader intouchable et père de la constitution indienne* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Politiques, 2000).

What we can derive from all this is that, in order to be adequately sophisticated, the study of the 'guru institute'—always to be historically contextualized—must necessarily take into consideration its ideological construction along with its concrete, dynamic forms of manifestation and change, being part and parcel of the complex socio-political texture.

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THE SĀṂKHYA SAGE KAPILA AND KASHMIRI VIṢṆU IMAGES

Pratapaditya Pal

Abstract

The article reexamines the identification of the fourth head on Viṣṇu images of Kashmir known generally as Vaiṣṇuṭha. This head has been identified for almost a century as representing the sage Kapila, the founder of the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy who came to be regarded as an avatār of Viṣṇu. The article re-examines the literary evidence and suggests an alternative explanation for the ‘demonic’ fourth head.

Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate the most characteristic Kashmiri image of the Brahmanical god Viṣṇu. He is seated on Garuḍa, his avian mount, with his spouse Lakṣmī perched on his left thigh. His four heads are oriented in the four directions and he has four arms, the hands holding four attributes. His faces are human in the front, leonine on the right, porcine on the left and ‘demonic’ at the rear but with a tall chignon of an ascetic crowning the head. The rear face is described as *kāpila* in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, and has been taken to represent Kapila, the legendary founder of the Sāṃkhya system of Indian philosophy.¹ However, it should be noted that the face is not of a benign sage but clearly demonic or wrathful, a reflection of the literal meaning of the word *kāpila* in the sense of *raudra* or angry.

¹ The description occurs in the *Pratimālakṣaṇa* section of the third part (*khaṇḍa*) of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. This *purāṇa* was almost certainly composed in Kashmir no later than the 7th century. See C. Sivaramamurti, *Chitrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara* (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1978), pp. 17–42 for a long discussion regarding the date of the text. He concludes that it was compiled between the Kushan and the Gupta period which is perhaps too early. While the text does include iconographic data encountered in the art of the Kushan period (1st–3rd century C.E.), the work was likely compiled between the 5th and the 7th century. Curiously, Sivaramamurti seems unaware of the discussions of the date of the text by R. C. Hazra in *Studies in the Upapurāṇas* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1958) vol. 1, pp. 202–212. Hazra concludes that it is a work of the 5th century.

The relevant Sanskrit passage reads:

*mukhāśca kāryāścatvāro bahavo dviguṇāsthathā /
saumyaṃ tu vadaṇaṃ pūvaṃ nāraśiṃhaṃ tu dakṣiṇam //
kāpilaṃ paścimaṃ vaktraṃ tathā vārāhamuttaram /*²

It is not clear why most scholars have interpreted the expression *kāpila* to refer to a person rather than the quality of anger. For instance, while the reference to the two side faces representing Nara-siṃha and Varāha, two avatār-s of Viṣṇu, is unambiguous, the pairing of *saumya* (benign) and its opposite *kāpila* (malign) would indicate that the words are not being applied necessarily as names but as qualities. Yet most scholars, including the present writer in the past, have taken the word as a noun and interpreted it as signifying the sage Kapila. A noteworthy fact is that the *Nilamatapurāṇa*, a minor and local *purāṇa* devoted to the myths and religion in ancient Kashmir, does not at all mention Kapila in any form.³

However, that Kapila, the founder of the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy, had become an important and even deified figure by the time the *Viṣṇudharmottara* was composed is clear from other references in the text. An entire chapter (78) is devoted to describing his form. The title of the chapter is *vairāgya rūpanirmāṇam* and he is clearly regarded as the very embodiment of nonattachment (*vairāgya*).⁴ Because this chapter is the only known iconographic description of Kapila, the salient features of his conceptual and iconographical forms are noted below.

He is described as an ascetic god (*kapilo devo*) whose matted hair is so thick as to make his face scarcely visible (*jaṭāmaṇḍaladurdṛśaḥ*). He is seated in the lotus posture with the soles of his feet marked with the lotus flower and his nostrils are 'swelled up due to the suspension of the breath'.⁵ This clearly characterizes him as a yogi

² Ch. 44, vv 11–12. See P. Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa* Third Khaṇḍa vol. 1 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1961) p. 157 and D.C. Bhattacharya, *Pratimālakṣaṇa* of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 1991), pp. 3–4.

³ Ved Kumari, *The Nilamata Purana*, 2 vols. (Srinagar: J & K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages 1973).

⁴ See D. C. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.* pp. 191–194. Apparently two successive chapters are numbered 78.

⁵ *vāyusamrodhapiṇāśaḥ padmāṅkacaraṇadvaya* / This is an interesting description of a yogic symptom or indicator which I have not come across elsewhere. Normally, most descriptions of the yogic posture mention the eyes pointing towards the 'tip' or 'root' of the nose (*samprekṣya māsikāgram* as in the *Bhagavadgītā*). Here, however,

seated in meditation and involved in breathing exercises. Moreover, he is said to wear the antelope skin and the sacrificial cord (*yajñōpavīta*) of the brahman. We are also told that the high- or noble-minded one (*mahānubhāva*) achieved the supreme state (*paramapada*) of enlightenment because of meditation (*dhyāna*) which is why the ancient Puruṣa (*puruṣa purāṇa*) is represented seated in the posture of meditation. His deification is indicated by his four arms, two of which are placed in his lap, the right palm on the left palm and the other two support the conchshell and the wheel. This, as well as his characterization of *puruṣa pradhāna*, make it clear that Kapila is here being identified with Viṣṇu. Incidentally, except for the regal attire, the images of meditating Viṣṇu, also known as *yogāsana* Viṣṇu, conforms to the description for Kapila, (fig. 3). Particularly relevant is the passage that 'Vairāgya (Detachment) should be known as Pradyumna in the bodily form of Kapila.'⁶ We will return to this presently.

In chapter 47, there is a cryptic reference to Kapila that once again stresses the sage's meditation posture. In describing Nṛvarāha or the Man-Boar avatār of Viṣṇu the author says that he can be represented as seated like the meditating Kapila.⁷

The most elaborate description of a Viṣṇu image with the expression *devodyārūpa* in the chapter heading, is reserved for chapter 85.⁸ After describing the form of Vāsudeva who is characterized as eternal (*śāśvata*) and the great soul (*mahātmana*), in whom the four elements (sky, air, fire and water) dissolve, the four *vyūha*-s or primary

clearly the allusion is to the *prāṇāyāma* exercise where the yogi holds his breath. See p. 194, note 5 in Bhattacharya, *op. cit.* for a discussion of this expression.

⁶ *pradyumnaṃ viddhi vairāgyaṃ kāpīlīm tanumāsthitaṃ* / Note the use of the expression *kāpīlī* as well, p. 191. Gopinath Rao in his *Elements of Hindu Iconography* Vol. 1, pt. I (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971), pp. 247–248 states that Pradyumna assumed the form of Kapila 'when he became free from the influence of all worldly desires' but does not cite a source.

⁷ Verse 9, *nṛvarāho'ṭha vā kāryo dhyāna kapilavatsthitaḥ* Ibid., p. 204.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 240–251. See also discussion in Shah, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 142–143. A grand theological synthesis is described in the first 43 verses where various gods of the Brahmanical pantheon serve as *pratīhāra* or doorkeepers of the *vyūha* deities. Interestingly, the doorkeepers of Vāsudeva are not other gods but the eight magical powers or *siddhi*—also known as *aśvarya*—such as *animā*, *laghimā*, etc., clearly reflecting tantric influence. The section ends with the statement, 'Thus I have stated to you about the making of the four-fold images. Conformed into a single body referred to by the term *Vaikunṭha*, the lord should be made with four faces mentioned earlier.' Indeed, this grand vision could well serve as the prescription of a mandala.

emanatory forms of the god are delineated. These are Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha and Pradyumna. Thus, the four-headed form of Viṣṇu, the hallmark of Vaiṣṇava images of Kashmir, not only represent the *vyūha* concept of Pāñcarātra theology, which is the foundation of Kashmiri Vaiṣṇavism, but also corroborates the identification of Kapila through Pradyumna with Viṣṇu.

Chapter 47 further describes the symbolic meaning of the attributes of this supreme Vāsudeva where Sāṃkhya and Yoga ideas play important roles. For example, two of Viṣṇu's attributes, the club and the wheel, are said to symbolize the sun and the moon, the club being female and representing Prakṛti and the male wheel Puruṣa.⁹ The fiery bow and arrow in the hands of Pradyumna are emblematic of Sāṃkhya and Yoga.¹⁰ With these two weapons the yogi is said to penetrate the ultimate goal of contemplation. Furthermore, the sword of Aniruddha is said to be used by yogis to sever the bonds of the phenomenal world.¹¹ Symbolizing *vairāgya* or renunciation, it gives joy to the yogis and is therefore known as *nandaka*.

Thus, although in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* and elsewhere¹² Kapila is regarded as an avatār of Viṣṇu, are we justified in identifying the 'demonic' head of *Caturānana* images as representing the Sāṃkhya teacher? The answer must be 'no' for two principal reasons. One is, of course, the fact that the text devotes an entire chapter to Kapila where there is no mention of a 'demonic' face. Second, in yet another description of the four-headed Viṣṇu, known as *Vaikuṇṭha*, the fourth head is characterized by the word *raudra*, a synonym of *kāpila*. The passage is as follows:

⁹ *puruṣaprakṛtī jñeyau sūryacandramasābhuvau //*
ete ca vāsudevasya kare cakragadā smṛte / (47.13)

¹⁰ *pradyumnasya kare vahne śāṅgaṃ cāpaṃ ca yatsmṛtam //* (47.15)

sāṃkhyam tadviddhi dharmayāna yogaṃ bānam prakīrtitam /
dhyeyaṃ tu paramaṃ lakṣyaṃ tābhyāṃ chindanti yoginaḥ // (47.16)

¹¹ *vairāgyaṃ nandakaṃ khadgaṃ chitvā vai tena bandhanam /*
nandanti yogine yasmāttasmāttannandakaṃ smṛtam // (47.18)

It may be noted that in Buddhist iconography the sword of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is said to cut through the fog of ignorance.

¹² In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (I, 3.10) he is described as lord of the siddhas (*siddheśa*) and characterized as the fifth avatār of Viṣṇu. See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, pt. II (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1977), p. 1373. For the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa* evidence, see R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇa* vol. II (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1967), p. 416. In fact, even earlier in the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa identifies himself with Kapila who is characterized as *siddhānām kapila muni*. The Pāñcarātra texts also emphasize Kapila being an avatār.

He is in his four-fold presence, when he is shown with four faces. The eastern (i.e. frontal) face, which is known to be the principal one, should be placid. The southern face (i.e. the face on the right), the face of knowledge, should resemble that of a lion. The western face (i.e. the face at the back) of the four-faced god would be made as fierce-looking (*raudra*) and this is known to represent his supremacy.¹³

Again the author of the passage has used the word *raudra* as the opposite of *saumya*, as in the description referred to earlier. Interestingly, the Sanskrit word translated as 'supremacy' is *aiśvarya* which is probably better rendered as 'majesty,' which is always awesome. For instance, in the *Bhagavadgītā* (Chapter 11) Arjuna is terrified by the vision of Kṛṣṇa's universal form. His terrifying face, its gaping mouth displaying dreadful and fearsome teeth (*daṁṣṭrākaraṇāni bhayānaka* 11, 27), frightens the young Arjuna who exclaims: 'Reveal yourself! What awesome form are you? I adore you, lord! Be merciful.'¹⁴ Thus, it would seem that the so-called 'demonic' head at the back represents this awesome, majestic form of the deity and also his dual nature, as is the case with Śiva and his terrifying form, Rudra or Bhairava.¹⁵

There is, however, always a fly in the ointment. In the dedicatory inscription of the Lakshman temple of Khajuraho (954 C.E.), a novel interpretation of the heads is offered by the unknown royal panegyrist. The relevant portion is as follows:

May that Vaikuntha protect you who frightened the whole world with his roaring and who slew the three demon-chiefs Kapila and others, who were possessed of one body bearing (i.e. producing) the howl (*āraṇa*) of the Boar and Man-Lion, and the (body) which on account of a boon from Brahmā (Aja) could be slain only by an identical form.¹⁶

¹³ Bhattacharya *op. cit.*, p. 252. Ch. 85. 44–45. How the confusion of the *raudra* or *kāpila* face with that of the teacher Kapila has persisted is evident from Bhattacharya's comment on p. 264, n. 13. He writes: 'Surprisingly, only three of the four faces are mentioned here (which is true). The fourth face, i.e. the northern face (left face) known as Kapila, is not mentioned.' This of course is not true. The omitted face is that of Varāha which is the northern face.

¹⁴ *ākṣāyāhi me ko bhavānugrarūpo namo'stu te devavara prasīda* (11, 31 A). Note that the word used here is *ugra* to define the form, which is the same as *raudra* and *kapila*.

¹⁵ As a matter of fact, Kapila is also one of Śiva's epithets. The use of the word *aiśvarya* to characterize the angry face is interesting because in yoga the word has a technical meaning and refers to the eight supernatural powers such as *animā* and *laghimā* as mentioned in note 8 above.

¹⁶ Davangana Desai, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho* (Mumbai: Franco-Indian Research, 1996), pp. 99 and 211.

Ingenuous as this explanation is, the myths about Viṣṇu's destruction of three demons called Kapila, Narasiṃha and Varāha are unknown either in epic or puranic literature. Indeed, none of the stories about Narasiṃha and Varāha can be interpreted to suit the assertion. Since the panegyrist does not mention any textual authority and since there is no independent literary corroboration of this explanation, it must for the present be regarded as a contrived theory.¹⁷

To conclude, there is only slender and indirect evidence—through the emanatory Pradyumna who is identified with the Sāṃkhya teacher and the awesome vision of Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*—to identify the rear 'demonic' face of the four-headed Kashmiri Viṣṇu images as that of Kapila. Kapila is described separately in the texts as a great sage engaged in meditation who is both a lord of the siddhas and an avatār of Viṣṇu. And like all other great religious teachers, both orthodox and heterodox, from Mahāvīra, the Buddha, the Pāśupata teacher Lakulīśa, the savant Śaṃkarācārya, down to the nineteenth century mystic Ramakrishna of Bengal, Kapila too has been conceived as an ideal yogi. But while the others are represented in art, we are yet to come across an ancient image of the Sāṃkhya teacher.¹⁸

¹⁷ It may be remembered that the Vaikuṇṭha image installed in the temple was brought from the Himalayan region, and, uncertain of the meaning of the heads, the panegyrist may have invented an explanation. Alternatively, the passage may reveal local religio-political ideas that we do not understand today. Be that as it may, the angry face certainly does not represent the Sāṃkhya teacher. It may be mentioned in passing that there is one puranic reference to a Kapila being the son of Prahlāda, whose *asura* father Hiranyakaśipu was destroyed by Narasiṃha. It should be noted however that the meditating Viṣṇu as *yogīśvara* predominates in the iconographic programme of the Lakshman temple (see *Ibid.*, pp. 116–121). Furthermore, there is a form of Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavism known as *kāpileyapāñcarātra*.

¹⁸ Most images of Kapilamuni such as that in the shrine at Gangasagar at the delta of the Ganges in the Bay of Bengal are recent works and depict a benign, meditating sage. Incidentally, this Kapilamuni is likely the sage associated with the myth of the descent of the river Ganges. While some identify him with the Sāṃkhya teachers, others such as Śaṃkarācārya, regard him as a different person.

Intriguingly, two well-known but mysterious figures in Sri Lanka have been identified by some scholars as one or the other Kapila but the suggestions are unconvincing. See Ulrich von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculpture of Sri Lanka* (Hong Kong: Visual Dharma Publication, 1990), pp. 274–275, 632 and 636–637 for illustrations and bibliographical references.

Finally, I am honored to present this modest article as a tribute to my friend and a modern Sāṃkhyācārya, Gerald Larson, from whose writings on both Sāṃkhya and Yoga I have profited much.

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Fig. 1: *Vaikunṭha Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī on Garuḍa*
 India, Jammu and Kashmir
 11th Century C.E.
 Phylite, 59.4 cm

From the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection, Museum Associates
 Purchase Los Angeles County Museum of Art; M.72.53.1
 (Photo: Courtesy of LACMA)



Fig. 2: Rear View of Fig. 1



Fig. 3: *Meditating Viṣṇu as Yogīśvara*

India, Karnataka

1100–1150 C.E.

Schist, 125.1 cm

Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena F1975.17.1.S

(Photo: Courtesy NSM)

THE YOGIC EXERCISES OF THE 17TH CENTURY SUFIS¹

Craig Davis

Abstract

Mughal Prince Dara Shukuh was a seventeenth-century Sufi scholar and heir-apparent to his father Shah Jahan's throne. This essay describes the yogic practices discussed in Dara's writings and details how, in the prince's eyes, these exercises were merely a continuation of Islamic tradition, dating back to the Prophet Muhammad. Dara's treatise *Risalah-i ḥaqq numā* describes Nāth-yogic exercises that his Sufi predecessors had handed down from master to student for centuries. The Mughal prince perceived these Nāth-yogic traditions as both Hindu and Islamic. By claiming that these Haṭha-yogic exercises could be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad—who according to Dara had received revelation at Mt. Hira while practicing yoga—that Mughal prince inextricably interwove South Asian lore with Islamic tradition in a way that laid the very foundation of Islamic revelation on those yogic exercises.

It should surprise no one that in seventeenth-century India, a spiritual master wrote a treatise describing *Nāth*-yogic exercises. Nor may it seem unusual that this spiritual master was a Sufi merely describing practices that his Sufi predecessors had handed down from master to student for centuries. For those familiar with Mughal history, it may not even seem unusual that the author of this treatise was Prince Dara Shukuh (d. 1659), a Sufi scholar and heir-apparent to his father Shah Jahan's throne. What may strike many as odd, however, is the fact that Dara Shukuh perceived these *Nāth*-yogic traditions as not just Hindu but also Islamic. More significantly yet, as we shall see, by claiming that these *Haṭha*-yogic exercises could be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad—who according to Dara had received revelation at Mt. Hira while practicing yoga—the Mughal prince had inextricably interwoven South Asian lore into

¹ This essay draws on the research findings of the author's dissertation entitled 'Dara Shukuh and Aurangzib: Issues of Religion and Politics and their Impact on Indo-Muslim Society,' Departments of Religious Studies and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Indiana University Bloomington, 2002.

Islamic tradition in such a way that laid the very foundation of Islamic revelation upon those yogic exercises.

Background

Dara Shukuh is best known as Shah Jahan's (d. 1666) eldest son, the heir-apparent to the throne, who was executed by his brother Aurangzib (d. 1707) in 1659, allegedly for heresy, after a bloody struggle for succession to the throne. It has become common belief, even among scholars and historians, that Aurangzib ordered Dara's execution because of Dara's attempt to meld Hindu mysticism with Sufism. Some have even gone so far as to point to the prince's treatises that blurred the lines between Hinduism and Islam as the determining factor for the execution. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, while there is little doubt that Aurangzib had indeed used Islam (or Islamic intolerance) as a weapon against his older brother, the evidence from the historical sources indicates that Aurangzib considered Dara's threat to the political stability of the empire a much larger danger than the prince's religious views.²

Dara and Aurangzib's father, Shah Jahan, is best known for having constructed the Taj Mahal—an elaborate mausoleum for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal (d. 1631), who had given birth to the four sons who would go on to fight for the Mughal throne. Sufism had long been a consistent component of the Mughal court well before the birth of Prince Dara Shukuh. Having failed to sire a male heir, emperor Shah Jahan prayed for a son at the shrine of the deceased saint Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236). The emperor's next child was indeed a male heir: Dara Shukuh. For both the emperor and Dara himself, the prince's birth was nothing less than the miraculous intervention of the deceased saint. As the blessed oldest son, Dara Shukuh became heir apparent to the throne.³

After Dara, Mumtaz Mahal bore the emperor three more sons: Shuja' (d. ca. 1661), Aurangzib, and Murad Bakhsh (d. 1661). These sons would go on to play pivotal roles in the struggle for succession

² See Davis, 'Dara Shukuh and Aurangzib,' Chapter One and the Conclusion.

³ Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Dārā Shikūh: Life and Works* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982), 1–2.

that began when Shah Jahan fell ill in 1657. Because the emperor became convinced his death was immanent, he ordered key Mughal nobles to swear an oath of allegiance to his eldest son and heir-apparent, Dara Shukuh. As was customary during this period, a struggle for succession of the throne erupted. Dara's three younger brothers marched towards the capital of Agra to oust Dara. Two of these brothers, Murad Bakhsh and Shuja', crowned themselves emperor. The most politically astute of the four brothers, Aurangzib, strategically disavowed his designs on the throne and aligned himself with the youngest brother, Murad Bakhsh. This newly-formed alliance combined military forces and resources. The brothers mobilized their armies in the direction of the capital. As they neared the River Chambal, Dara formed an army of loyalist forces and freshly recruited butchers, barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and tailors. Shah Jahan requested Dara to wait for reinforcements from Prince Sulaiman's army. Sulaiman, Dara's son, was on his way back to Agra after having defeated Sultan Shuja'. Ignoring his father's advice, an arrogant Dara mobilized his army along the River Chambal to face the rebel armies, promising to deliver the *traitors* bound at the emperor's feet.⁴ It had been Dara's intention that the presence of his troops at Dholpur, a major ford of the River Chambal, would prevent or delay the rebels crossing, at least until Sulaiman Shukuh and his army could arrive. The savvy Aurangzib, however, convinced a Hindu prince named Champat to lead the rebel troops to a little-known ford, where they successfully crossed.

On May 29th, 1658 Dara's loyalist troops met the rebel forces on a battlefield near a village named Samugarh. Due to Aurangzib's intrigues, Dara made a number of tactical errors, and his troops were soundly defeated. Dara fled, and Aurangzib captured his brother's camp. The next day Aurangzib's forces moved on Agra. Shah Jahan, who was recovering in the harem at Agra fort, remained confined there as a prisoner along with the female inmates until his death eight years later.

With the help of certain key Mughal figures, Aurangzib won the confidence of most of the other nobles formerly loyal to his father. Aurangzib then, set about systematically eliminating all potential male

⁴ Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor, or Mughal India*, trans. William Irvine (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1981), 1: 255.

heirs. Murad Bakhsh was arrested allegedly for drinking alcohol on June 25th and transported to Gwalior Fort where he eventually was executed.⁵ Aurangzib absorbed Murad's army and resources into his own. Dara's son Sulaiman Shukuh was captured and executed after a year in Gwalior prison.⁶ Shuja' disappeared. Conflicting reports range from his death on the battlefield to a successful flight to another country to his assassination.⁷ In the end, Aurangzib had eliminated—through execution, fratricide, and imprisonment—most of the other male contenders (his own son, brothers, nephews, and his father) whom he considered threats.

In pursuit of Dara, Aurangzib stopped in Delhi long enough to crown himself 'Alamgir (World Conqueror) on July 21st.⁸ In the meantime, Dara fled from Delhi to Lahore and then to Multan at the end of October 1658, reportedly at the head of eight thousand men.⁹ With Aurangzib's army in pursuit, Dara succeeded in crossing over into Gujarat only with extreme hardship. Shah Nawaz Khan, the governor of the province, admitted Dara's army into Ahmadabad on January 9th, 1659. The governor opened Murad's treasury containing one million rupees to Prince Dara Shukuh. After five weeks at the provincial capital, Dara had raised the numbers of his army from eight thousand to twenty-two thousand men. Dara's forces then secured a mountain pass near Ajmer and awaited the arrival of Aurangzib's army. The ensuing Battle of Deorai lasted three days and ended in Dara's defeat once again on March 14th.¹⁰

The prince then fled with his family and a handful of loyal soldiers in the direction of Ahmadabad, where he held out hopes of finding refuge. Unfortunately, Dara Shukuh's ragtag forces were met

⁵ John F. Richards. *The Mughal Empire. The New Cambridge History of India* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1998), 160; Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 289–92. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib* (Bombay: Oriental Longman, LTD, 1973), 2: 270–73; S. M. Edwardes and H. L. O. Garrett *Mughal Rule in India* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1962), 68–69; also see Stanley Lane-Poole, *Mediaeval India Under Mohammedan Rule (A.D. 712–1764)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1917), 355–56. Notice, however, Lane-Poole has confused the details of the location of Murad's execution.

⁶ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, 350.

⁷ Ibid., 378–79; *The Cambridge History of Islam from The Indian Subcontinent, South-East Asia, Africa and the Muslim West*, ed. Ann K. S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis P.M. Holt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 49.

⁸ Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 160; 'Aurangzib,' *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999.

⁹ Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 297.

¹⁰ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, 309–323.

with a letter from the governor explaining that the gates were shut to him. The next day French physician Francios Bernier (d. 1688) met up with Dara's group badly in need of medical attention. The French doctor attended Dara's needs, but in his writings lamented the poor condition of Dara's family and troops. Bernier wrote that the prince did not even have a tent to protect him from the elements, and his womenfolk were separated from the men only by a screen attached to a wagon.¹¹

From there, Dara fled to Kutch, later to Seistan, and then to the Bolan Pass. Finally, Malik Jivan—whom Dara had saved from execution a few years earlier in Delhi—offered to provide sanctuary for Dara and his family and ragtag group of loyal soldiers. It was at this time that the Mughal Prince received another blow: Nadira Begum, his devoted wife, died. Dara ordered her burial at Lahore beside the tomb of Miyan Mir.¹²

The Afghan Malik Jivan then captured Dara and his youngest son Sipihir Shukuh and took them back to Delhi in order to win favor with the new emperor. The two royal princes were bound and paraded on the back on an old, female elephant through the streets of Delhi, much to the disgust of many of the city residents. After this display, father and son were imprisoned. On August 30th, 1659, a group of men, including a slave named Nazar Beg, slipped into the prince's cell and lopped off Dara's head.¹³

Fortunately for religious historians, Prince Muhammad Dara Shukuh was survived by a number of his hagiographical writings and religious treatises that provide a window into the yogic exercises practiced by Sufis of the period. The first mention of such a practice surfaces in *Sakināt al-awḥyā'* (1642–43), a hagiography written by the prince when he was twenty-eight years old. Dara wrote that his deceased Sufi master Miyan Mir appeared to him in a vision at that *pīr's* tomb in Lahore. Miyan Mir gave the prince sweets, and put his fingers into his disciple's ears, which triggered a rapturous experience, called *sulṭān al-azkār* (King of the *zīkrs*) in Persian.¹⁴ *Sulṭān*

¹¹ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire: A.D. 1656–1688*, trans., Irving Brock and Archibald Constable (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1841), 89–90.

¹² Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 161.

¹³ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, 337–39.

¹⁴ Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), 2: 129.

al-azkār was a Sufi version of a tantric-yogic exercise later to be treated in some detail in *Risālah-i ḥaqq numā*, and eventually linked to its Hindu parallel in *Majmaʿ al-baḥrāʾin*.

Risālāh-i ḥaqq numā

The *Risālāh-i ḥaqq numā* reads like a Sufi manual for meditative exercises.¹⁵ Although these exercises bear an unmistakable resemblance to *haṭha*-yogic practices in circulation at the time, the prince explained that he was merely passing along the wisdom gleaned from his studies of Sufi doctrines.¹⁶

One of the ‘secrets’ learned by the prince is the existence of a Sufi path on which the adherent travels in order to reach God. This path is one ‘of struggle and mortification . . .’ The reader is told that a spiritual guide teaches the adherent this path ‘on which those people have (already) arrived. He does full justice to austerities and striving . . . after thousands of afflictions and troubles . . .’¹⁷ In an effort to advance along this path of hardship, the mystic must undertake a series of meditative exercises, which allow the devotee to progress through the four Sufi realms: *Nāsūt* (Human World), *malakūt* (Spiritual World), and *jabarūt* (the Highest Heaven), and *lāhūt* (Godhead).

The first step along this path to God involves a type of meditation, in which one must leave the material world—human world (*nāsūt*)—by conjuring up ‘the face of the *faqīr*’ or a loved one. The description of this exercise is only briefly described.

[H]e [the devotee] first must go alone to empty places and (he must) conjure up the face of the *faqīr* of whom he has a good opinion or the face of a person to whom he is connected by a relationship of

¹⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 100. Schimmel, like many other scholars of Sufism, uses the term ‘gnosis’ and its derivatives as English translations of *maʿrifā*, *ʿirfān*, or *ʿarīf*. These English terms, however, can be misleading and inadequate to the reader familiar with mysticism in other religions where often ‘gnosticism’ holds a more specific meaning. For example, see *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987). Therefore, I prefer to translate *maʿrifā*, *ʿirfān*, and *ʿarīf* as ‘intuitive knowledge’ or ‘mysticism’ or ‘mystic knower’ or ‘mystic’ where appropriate.

¹⁶ Dara Shukuh, *Risālāh-i Ḥaqq Numā*, Muskhābāt-i Asrār ed. M. R. Jalali Namini (Tehran: Eqbal, 1957), 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

love (*ishq*). And the way to imagine this is to close the eyes, turn towards the heart, and see with the eyes of the heart.¹⁸

According to the prince, there are three hearts. The first is the pinecone heart, or the fir tree heart (*dil-i şanawbarī*), which is found beneath the breast behind the left nipple. This is also called the human or animal heart. The second heart is the pia mater (*umm al-dammāgh*), in the region of the brain, literally ‘the mother of the brain.’ This is also called the round heart (*dil-i mudawwar*) or the colorless heart. When the *faqīr* meditates on this heart, no thoughts can enter. The final heart, we are told, is found in the middle of the buttocks. It is called the lotus heart (*dil-i nūfārī*). An analysis of this description reveals two separate sets of issues worth mentioning: The four Sufi realms and the three hearts. The prince tells his readers that concentration or meditation on the hearts, or with the eyes of the heart, will unlock the passageways to these subsequent worlds.

Clearly other Indian Sufis of the period were grappling with similar concepts and had made the connection with yogic tradition. Muhammad Enamul Haq, for example, describes the six Naqshbandi *laṭīfahs*, or centers of light, in the body that correspond closely to the six *cakra-s* in the *ṣaṭcakra* yogic tradition. These are the heart under the left breast, the soul beneath the right breast, the secret heart slightly below the heart, the secret soul below the soul, the most secret heart in the middle of the chest, and the evil self in the navel or in the middle of the two eyebrows.¹⁹ Saiyid Murtaza (d. 1662), in his *Yoga Qalandar*, made a connection between the Sufi realms and the *cakra-s*. *Nāsūt* (Human World) is identified with the *mūlādhāra cakra*, *malakūt* (Spiritual World) with the *maṇipūra cakra* in the navel region, *jabarūt* (Highest Heaven) emanated from the cerebral region, and *lāhūt* (Godhead), located in the heart, was associated with the *anāhata cakra* (mystical sound).²⁰

One can loosely associate Dara’s three hearts with three of the six *cakra-s* of yogic meditation, all being described as lotus flowers. The *anāhata cakra* in the region of the human heart would refer to

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A History of Sufism in Bengal* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975) 138–39.

²⁰ Rizvi, *Sufism in India*, 352–53; Haq, *Bengal*, 378–384.

the *dil-i šanawbarī*. The *viśuddha cakra* is associated with the medulla oblongata of the brain and corresponds to *umm al-dammāgh* (brain). The third is the *mūladhāra cakra* and according to Hindu tradition is situated between the anus and the genitals, which corresponds to Dara's lotus heart (*dil-i nīlūfarī*).

According to Dara's description, when the adherent conjures up an image of the spiritual leader with the eyes of the pinecone heart (human heart), the dream-like World of Imagination lying within the Spiritual World opens up.

... gradually the image and what is imagined become exact and cause the Spiritual World to open up. And when this image has entered well within your vision, the opening of the world of imagination becomes a blessing for you. And every time you become very attentive in this work, not one of the images, which are unseen, will remain hidden to you.²¹

This practice of visualization of a *pīr* is not uncommon in Indian Sufism. Haq, once again, is quick to associate this practice with the yogic processes of concentration, pointing out that the only difference between the two is that in yoga, concentration can be on any object, while in Sufism there is a tendency to focus on a *pīr*.²² Some Buddhists, however, undertook contemplative practices with which the practitioner would concentrate on an image of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, a teacher, or other figures until the image appeared.²³

Malakūt (*The Spiritual World*)

Once the adherent reaches *malakūt*, the exercises described by the prince for reaching the subsequent worlds are relevant for two reasons. First, Dara's description of the practices for the first time truly begins to bear the indelible shape of *haṭha*-yogic practices of the period. And second, it is now in this description for the first time that the prince links the Prophet Muhammad to the yogic exercises. The first steps in this exercise are posture and breath control.

²¹ Dara, *Ḥaqq numā*, 6.

²² Haq, *Bengal*, 140–41; one example can be found in the Yoga Qalandar, see Haq, *Bengal*, 15.

²³ Edward Conze, *Buddhist Meditation* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 59–61.

The way to do this is that one sits in the way of solitude that was the manner of sitting of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him salvation) and . . . he puts the elbows of both arms on the top of both knees and closes the holes of the ears with both thumbs; . . . and he takes both eyes with the index fingers . . . brings down the upper eyelids and holds them in place with both fingers . . . And he places the little fingers and the ring fingers of both hands over both lips, and he stops the air passage. He puts both middle fingers on both nostrils of the nose. In this way, he first obstructs the air passage by seizing the hole on the right side firmly and then lets the hole on the left side free and inhales, saying, 'There is no god.' He brings the breath up to the brain, and lowers it to the heart, and after that, having also closed off the hole on the left side, he sits holding his breath. From the beginning of this exercise to the extent that he can hold his breath without a headache or any trouble, he holds (it) and when it is time to release the breath, he lifts off the finger that was on the left nostril. And having exhaled the breath gently, he releases a gradual, 'but God' because letting it out quickly will damage (disrupt) the breath.²⁴

Dara then goes on to describe *sulṭān al-azkār*, which I have translated as 'King of the *zīkrs*.' It may be no coincidence that Dara describes this exercise in the passage immediately following the section on the breathing exercise. In fact, it appears that these two exercises do not represent independent practices themselves, but rather comprise one three-step process—posture, breath control, and concentration—triggering *sulṭān al-azkār*. This next passage demonstrates the connection between these steps, 'Oh friend, when you hold your breath in this exercise, you must continuously concentrate on the heart (*mutawajjah bi-dil bashī*) because in this exercise a voice will appear from within you . . . And some of the time this voice is like the sound of the boiling of a kettle and some of the time like the sound which comes from a bee hive.' This mystical sound descends upon the adherent, the prince tells the reader, after posture and breath control and concentration on the heart have been completed. At times sound resembles a boiling kettle, a swarm of bees, or a bell. For Dara, this was the most exalted exercise because of the pleasure the adherent received.²⁵

Oh friend when you want to begin the exercise of *sulṭān al-azkār* and (you want) to understand this holy exercise, you . . . sit, focusing on

²⁴ Dara Shukuh, *Ḥaqq numā*, 9–10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

your ears . . . so that the subtle voice appears to you. And that voice little by little becomes so overwhelming that it envelops you from all directions . . . They asked our Prophet (May God bless him and grant him salvation) about the circumstances of the descending of the revelation. He said, 'A voice comes to me sometimes like the boiling of a kettle and sometimes like the sound (voice) of a bee and sometimes I imagine an angel in the form of a man who speaks to me and I sometimes hear a sound like a tinkling of bell.'²⁶

There is very little likelihood, however, that the prince simply developed this practice and the tradition on his own. During his description of *sulṭān al-azkār*, for instance, he goes to great pains to secure this practice soundly within Islamic tradition. He explains that the exercise was handed down from the Messenger to Lord Gauth al-Thaqalin (Jilani) and from him to Lord Miyan Jiv (Miyan Mir). Next, we are told that the practice is based on many sound hadiths, which are written in the six canons, although the ulema never learned of this practice. This canonical validation and last hedge not only explain why the ulema are unaware of this exercise and could, therefore, not support it, but it also adds legitimacy to the yogic practice and the Sufis who undertake it. Such an important exercise as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad, recorded in the sacred texts, and well-known to the Sufis while it was unknown to the ulema demonstrates that Sufis are indeed the heirs to central Islamic spiritual knowledge, to which the ulema are excluded.

It was also clear that the Messenger always practiced this yogic exercise before and after every mission. The Prophet Muhammad and other prophets received revelation and divine commands from this voice, we are told. Plato was taught this exercise by Moses, after which Plato embraced Islam. Dara also writes, 'Our Messenger (May God bless him and grant him salvation) was occupied with *sulṭān al-azkār* in Hira Cave for six years.'²⁷ Once again, *sulṭān al-azkār* is not the brainchild of the Mughal Prince. Rather, the practice, as the prince describes it, is likely a variation of other similar Sufi practices that predate Dara's description. Sheikh 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (d. 1537), for instance, experienced a similar phenomena called *sulṭān-*

²⁶ Ibid., 12–13.

²⁷ Dara, *Haqq numā*, 12–14. Tabari relates that it was in a cave in these mountains that Muhammad first received revelation. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD ROM, 1999.

i zikr (King of *zikr*).²⁸ ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Simnani (d. 1336) believed that the mystic should sit cross-legged with the right hand over the left while the left hand kept the right leg in position over the left leg. This posture was an important prerequisite for performing *zikr*, and the practice of keeping the image of sheikh before the eyes would offer spiritual assistance to the adept during recollection.²⁹

As noted previously, Prince Dara Shukuh was merely passing on Sufi tradition that had been in existence in a variety of forms for centuries. What makes Dara’s practice culminating in *sulṭān al-azkār* unique, however, is the fact that he traces the tradition back to the Prophet Muhammad while making revelation—the very origin of Islam itself—reliant on this yogic exercise. As a result, the very event of revelation is based on this yogic practice. The Prophet Muhammad, according to Dara, received revelation from Allah while undergoing this practice. The Qur’an itself descended upon the prophet in the form of *sulṭān al-azkār* while sitting in a yoga position, controlling his breath, and meditating, all of which are unknown to the ulema.

The similarity between Dara’s exercises traceable to Qur’anic revelation and those described in *Nāth* yogic texts is striking. Notice, for example, a practice for reaching *samādhi* that is described in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*. This state or stage is referred to as *Rāja yoga* (King yoga), which in this context is synonymous with *samādhi*. It is important to point out that in some of these Haṭha yoga or Nāth texts, *Rāja yoga* is used, not in the classical yoga sense, but as a technical term that at times signifies *samādhi*, a state or goal one wishes to achieve, at times it is a practice one follows in order to achieve *samādhi*, while at least in one instance—it is described as the union of the mind and this mystical sound. Brahmananda’s commentary on Chapter Four of the the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* explains, ‘This chapter is wholly devoted to Rāja yoga. The *nāda* is a mystical sound similar to . . . the sound of a bell . . .’ In order to proceed, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* explains that the yogin must undertake a flawless form of breath control that includes blocking off ‘the ears, the nose, the mouth, and the eyes.’ There are then four stages to these mystical sounds that the yogin hears, as if emanating from the body. The

²⁸ Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, 1:342–43 & 352–53.

²⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 170.

first sounds are ‘tinkling sounds (as if ornaments) . . .’ In the second stage ‘rumbling sounds are heard like the sound of a kettle drum’ and a supreme bliss is experienced. Next, ‘the sounds of flute . . .’ are heard. ‘When the mind becomes one (with the object concentrated upon), it is called *Rāja Yoga*.’ These sounds gradually drown out all external sounds. ‘In the beginning, the sounds resemble those of the ocean, the clouds, the kettledrum . . .’ then a ‘conch, the bell, and the horn’ and in the end ‘tinkling bells, flutes . . . and the bees.’³⁰

Even closer yet to Dara’s description of the prophet’s exercises is the yogic process called *Rāja Yoga* found in another *haṭha*-yogic text, the *Śiva Saṃhitā*. The following description associates a breathing exercise with receiving the *anāhata* or *nāda* sounds. The yogin, we are told, should

. . . close the ears with his thumbs, eyes with index fingers, the nostril[s] with the middle fingers, and with the remaining four fingers let him press together the upper and lower lips. The Yogi, by having thus firmly confined the air, sees his soul in the shape of light. . . . This is my most beloved Yoga. From practicing this gradually, the Yogi begins to hear the mystic sounds (*nādas*) . . . The first sound is like the hum of the honey-intoxicated bee, next that of a flute, then a harp . . . the sounds of ringing bells . . . then sounds like roar of thunder . . .³¹

Notice the parallels with Dara’s description. Breath control is undertaken with the thumbs placed in the ears, the eyes are closed with the index fingers, the middle fingers are used to control the passage of air from nostrils, while the small and ring fingers are used to close the lips. Then the devotee begins to hear mystical sounds emanating from within the body. Among other sounds described are the buzzing of bees and the ringing of bells. Also notice the similarity between the names of these practices: *Sulṭān al-azkār* (King of *zikrs*) and *Rāja yoga* (King yoga).

Moreover, the link between *sulṭān al-azkār* and *Nāth*-Yogic concept of *anāhata* was not lost on Prince Muhammad Dara Shukuh. Some nine years after writing the *Haqq numā*, the prince produced *Majma‘ al-baḥrāin* (*The Confluence of the Two Oceans*), a mystical treatise that

³⁰ *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, translated by Pancham Singh (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997) 151–53 and 179–86. For the discussion on *samādhi* and *Rāja Yoga*, see pages 151–53.

³¹ *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, trans. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., 1975), 56–58.

attempted to find the spiritual confluence between mystic Islam and Hinduism. In *Majma'* the prince explicitly links *sulṭān al-azkār* to the Nāth yogic concept of *anāhata*. He makes clear the association between this Sufi practice that he learned from his *pīr*, Miyan Mir (who was deceased at the time), and *anāhata*, a term he uses on two occasions.³²

Conclusion

So there can be little doubt that Dara was transmitting, via his writings, knowledge of practices that he learned from his own Sufi masters, who had in turn learned them from their predecessors before them. In the *Ḥaqq numā*, Dara tells the reader that this treatise was revealed to him. With no further explanation, he provides an *asnād* (chain of authorities) leading from the Prophet Muhammad to 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166) to Sheikh Mir Quds (Miyan Mir) to Mullah Shah. For the prince, all conceptual roads of these mystical practices lead from the Prophet Muhammad. Later, Dara explains that this treatise should explain all the wisdom from the following Sufi works: *Futuhāt al-makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by Ibn al-'Arabi, *Risālah-i sawanih* by Ahmad al-Ghazzali, *Lawā'ih* and *Lawami'* by Nuru'-Din 'Abdul Rahman Jami, and *Lama'āt* by Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi.³³

For Dara, all of the aforementioned Sufi figures were central Islamic mystics, while the Prophet Muhammad was the greatest Sufi. The prophet practiced a number of ascetic exercises and underwent profound mystical experiences, many of which were identical to those experienced by the *muwaḥḥidān-i hind*. By dressing these *haṭha*-yogic exercises up in Sufi garb in *Risālah-i ḥaqq numā* and attributing these practices to the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic revelation, the Mughal prince has laid the foundation of Islam upon the soil of *Nāth* yogic tradition. In *Majma' al-bahra'in*, the prince goes further to link these concepts and practices to Islamic doctrines, often substantiating his arguments with verses from the Qur'an. What remains unclear is whether the prince's description of the Prophet Muhammad as having received Qur'anic revelation in the form of *sulṭān al-azkār*

³² Dara Shukuh, *Majma' ul-bahrain or The Mingling of the two Oceans*, ed. M. Mahfuz-ul-Haq (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1998), 47 and 71.

³³ Dara, *Ḥaqq numā*, 3–4.

while practicing *haṭha*-yogic exercises of posture, breath control, and meditation was Dara's creation or was passed down to the prince from his own Sufi masters.

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RĀJA YOGA, ASCETICISM, AND THE RĀMĀNANDA SĀMPRADĀY

Ramdas Lamb

Abstract

Suggestions of yogic and ascetic practices can be found among the earliest archaeological findings from the Indus Valley. Additionally, the ancient sacred chants, the Vedas and Upaniṣads, also tell of yogis and ascetics seeking liberation from the mundane. Eventually, some of these practices became formalized in the Rāja Yoga system. During the last two millennia, Rāja Yoga and many other ascetic practices have formed the basis of religious discipline for the many and varied Hindu renunciant orders. Today, the largest of these is the Rāmānanda Sāmpradāy. This chapter traces the development and connection between yogic and ascetic practices, and then focuses on how these are incorporated into the life of the Rāmānandī renunciant.

Although the actual origins of what has come to be called ‘yoga’ remain uncertain, archaeological indications suggest its roots can be traced to the Indus Valley civilization that existed more than four millennia ago. Excavations of the region have uncovered fired stone seals and tablets as well as sculptures depicting individuals sitting in various positions and poses reminiscent of yoga postures. Moreover, a few of the tablets depict an extremely difficult pose currently referred to as Gorakṣāsana, and this suggests both a knowledge of yoga āsana-s as well as some form of meditation.¹ Predictably, archaeological evidence from the region suggests the early presence of ascetics and ascetic practices as well.²

¹ Items excavated at both Harappa and Mohenjo-daro bear the likeness of a male (possibly a deity) sitting in a ‘yogic’ posture and surrounded by various animals. The image is often referred to as ‘Proto-Śiva’, since it is believed to be an early representation of Śiva.

² M. G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1976), pp. 3–4.

Yoga in Vedic and Post-Vedic Literature

Reference to a class of ascetics, called *muni*-s, can be found in the Sanskrit and brahmanical tradition as early as the time of the *Ṛg Veda*. They were said to be long haired individuals who had mystical powers, some of which later become associated both with ascetic practices, collectively referred to as ‘*tapas*’ or ‘*tapasya*,’ and with the practice of yoga. Thus, from an early date, yoga and asceticism, as forms of spiritual endeavor, have come to be connected. During the latter Vedic times, a variety of terms are used to describe different ascetic practices and individuals, including those known as *Vrātyas* (lit. ‘vow takers’).³ The *Atharva Veda* contains several references to them and their use of postures (*āsana*-s) and breath control practices (*prāṇāyāma*) to attain spiritual powers. In the text, *prāṇa*, or ‘breath,’ is identified with the supreme spirit and the source of all life.

With the rise of Upaniṣadic thinking and literature, the interiorization of sacrifice becomes apparent, with a concomitant emphasis on *tapas*, knowledge, and the attainment of transcendental experience taking precedence over ritual worship. The Upaniṣadic *ṛṣi*-s stress knowledge of and identification with Brahman as the goal of existence, and they find commonality with ascetic practitioners in seeking this transcendental knowledge and immortality. Direct and indirect references to yogic practices are evident in some of the earliest Upaniṣads, including those later associated with Rāja Yoga. They appear alone and in connection with *tapas* in many of the later texts in this category. Thus, here, too, the practice of *tapas* and of yoga are connected and considered legitimate, and they form an integral part of the teachings and the *sādhana* (‘religious practice’) passed down from teacher to disciple.

By the time of Hindu Epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, the practitioners of yoga are primarily ascetic yogis (male) and yoginīs (female). Little mention is made of lay practitioners. Ascetics undertake extreme austerities in order to acquire both yogic powers and liberation. Moreover, a variety of *siddhi*-s (supernatural powers) are said to be achieved through the practice of yoga, including such

³ In the *Ṛg Veda*, the term ‘*vrātya*’ literally meant ‘obedient, faithful.’ It later comes to refer to one ‘belonging to or fit for a religious observance,’ and then ‘engaged in a religious observance.’ (Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon, <http://www.unikoeln.de>)

abilities as levitation, controlling the thoughts of others, knowing past and future lives, and even gaining power over certain types of spirits. In the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, the goddess Pārvatī uses her yogic abilities to fast for thousands of years to gain both ascetic power as well as Śiva's favor.⁴ Throughout the Epics, there is frequent mention of hermits and other renunciants who undertake diverse forms of austerity, in conjunction with the practice of yoga, in order to attain various yogic powers, or *yoga śakti*. Although liberation is an important goal for many practitioners, for others, the quest is worldly and the goal is psychic powers, and even material wealth. Interpolations to the core *Mahābhārata*, theorized by some to have been added at about the same time as the introduction of the *Bhagavadgītā* into the text, give status and legitimacy to the practice of yoga, by which one can attain both power and enlightenment. What is identified as yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā* and in the latter sections of the *Mahābhārata* includes a broader range of actions than the Patañjali system. In the *Mahābhārata*, as in the Upaniṣads, most ascetics are renunciants, and yoga and *tapas* are treated at times as being essentially the same.⁵

During the few centuries just preceding the Common Era, a series of later Upaniṣads were authored. Among these are the Sannyāsa, Śaiva, and Yoga Upaniṣads. The concentration of the first two sets are on different types of asceticism, while the third focuses almost entirely on yogic philosophy and techniques. Soon thereafter, ample literary reference can be found regarding a vast array of ascetics and ascetic groups, separated essentially by the types of austerities practiced. Among the practices, elements of the system elaborated by Patañjali are apparent, with some ascetics adhering to the entire system. The goals of the various groups seem to have also been diverse, with some seeking immortality and others liberation. The *Vaikhānasasmārta Sūtra*, a fourth century text, elaborates upon the practices and distinctions of many of these groups.⁶ Again, the practice of *tapas* and various elements of the yoga system were used in conjunction by many of the individuals and groups mentioned in the text.

⁴ Vālmīki, *Rāmāyaṇa* (I.35.19–20).

⁵ Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 146–151.

⁶ Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 139–142.

The eighteen major Purāṇic texts and the many minor ones deal primarily with cosmogonies, history and legends, and stories of great beings and divinities. They contain colorful tales of yogis and yoginīs who have awe-inspiring supernatural powers resulting from their yogic practices and austerities. Some of the texts also provide descriptions of the various forms of yoga and *tapas* performed and the benefits derived therefrom. While there are some mentions of lay practitioners, most who undertook the various practices are renunciants and ascetics, for the knowledge and abilities to do these are seen to be primarily the purview of the *virakta*.

Sectarian Upaniṣads and Medieval Yogis

During the first millennium C.E., Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions included innumerable yogic practices, in conjunction with diverse personal and joint rituals, to attain the goals of power and liberation. During the same time period, the sectarian Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads present literary evidence of the coming together of asceticism, yoga, tantra, and devotionism. All of the elements are comingled in the *sādhana* promoted in these texts. Each of the Upaniṣads in the group focuses its primary attention and devotion on a particular divinity. The various techniques described are meant to earn the practitioner the wisdom and power to gain direct experience and contact with the respective divinity, as well as immortality, wisdom, and devotion.

Among the variety of ascetic groups that undertook yogic practices during the medieval period were the Pāśupatas, the Kāpālikas, and the Kānpaṭa Yogis. Although many of these have long ceased to exist, and about which there is little of certainty known, a few have continued up to the present day. The contemporary Gorakhnāth Saṃpradāy has its roots in the Kānpaṭa Yoga tradition. This order, which began early in the second millennium is an example of an ascetic order that has long combined elements of the yoga, asceticism, and *tantra* to achieve the twin goals of power and enlightenment. Followers credit the group's traditional founder, Gorakhnāth, with writing a foundational and in-depth treatise entitled *Haṭha Yoga*, the substance and philosophy of which is central to their contemporary religious practices. Along with his guru, Matsyendranāth, Gorakhnāth is said to have performed great feats of yoga and asceticism, through

which he attained many *siddhi*-s. Moreover, the present-day order reveres many of its past members as *siddha*-s, possessors of great *siddhi*-s. As has been the case throughout Indian history, elements of the various orders mentioned here were subsequently adopted and reconfigured in the formation of new ascetic groups. One such group is the Rāmānanda Saṁpradāy.

The Rāmānanda Saṁpradāy

The origins of the Rāmānanda Saṁpradāy are steeped in mythology and legend.⁷ Most Rāmānandī-s venerate Swami Rāmānanda (circa 14th–15th century) as founder of their order. While little actual evidence of him, his life, and his practices exist, there are various writings that suggest a collection of ascetics devoted to Rām were present in or around the 15th century in North India. These renunciants may well have been the forerunners or early members of the Saṁpradāy.

Tradition has it that Rāmānanda was initially an ascetic in the Śrī Saṁpradāy, which was founded in the eleventh or twelfth century by Rāmānujācārya. The order adhered to the founder's Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy and combined with it the practices of asceticism, yoga, and devotion. During subsequent generations, a variety of doctrines and rules evolved that discriminated against low caste, householders, and females, setting them apart as being inherently inferior and ritually impure. Rāmānanda eventually ran afoul with these restrictions, which he came to view as discriminatory and incompatible with his own spiritual path and enlightenment. Ultimately, he left the Saṁpradāy along with other ascetics and devotees attracted by his teachings, and he started his own order. Since his disagreement was specifically with the post-Rāmānuja doctrines and discriminatory practices, he kept much of the theology, philosophy, and ascetic aspects of the Śrī Saṁpradāy. What he rejected were the

⁷ In attempting to understand any Indian ascetic tradition, we are often left to depend on secondary sources for information, since ascetics have seldom ever written about themselves and their practices. Thus, as is the case with most of our understanding of the past in India, we must rely on speculation in our interpretation of these secondary sources.

bulk of its caste and gender restrictions, as well as many of the allied and narrow social doctrines that had been adopted.

In developing his own monastic order, Rāmānanda emphasized that the primary goal of *sādhana*, or religious practice, is liberation from the cycle of birth and death so that one can experience eternal love of and oneness with God, through the aspect of Rām. The means to be used for the realization of this goal include both worldly renunciation and selfless devotion. In contrast to the restrictions of the Rāmanuja order, it is said that Rāmānanda did not place limits on who could become a follower and consequently attracted a widely diverse group, including individuals from many castes and occupations, women, householders, and even Muslims, the most famous of the latter being Kabir. Although he was a renunciant himself, this did not prevent Rāmānanda from teaching householders various forms of ascetic as well as devotional practices. As a result, the current Rāmānanda Saṃpradāy has an enormous lay membership, which closely and regularly interacts with and supports the ascetics of the order.

Rāmānandī-s traditionally refer to the founder of their order as a great yogi, yet there is little known, even within the order itself, the extent to which he may have practiced yoga. What is known is that he became a popular religious reformer and teacher, and it was both his teachings and his own ascetic existence that attracted so many people from various castes and occupations to follow him and take initiation into the life of renunciation. This tradition of drawing renunciant members from many castes has continued up to the present day, and it is why the Rāmānanda Saṃpradāy currently has the largest number of *virakta* members of any Hindu order, an estimated one and a half million.⁸ Commonly referred to as 'Rāmānandī-s,' 'Vairāgi-s,'⁹ or simply '*sādhu*-s,' its followers come primarily from villages in the northern and western states, especially Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. Since they bring with them elements of their own religious cultures, the diversity of the order's austerities and activities shows not only the influence of previous ascetic movements but also of a variety of regional religious

⁸ This number is based on a 1990 study done by the Akhil Bharatiya Sādhu Samaj, an organization of renunciants and others connected with the tradition.

⁹ From the Sanskrit '*vairāgya*,' or 'non-attachment.'

traditions and practices. Add to this the various subgroupings within the order, and the diversity of practices become even greater. Nevertheless, the practice of yoga, at one level or another, remains an important part of the Vairāgi life and life style. Thus, the present-day order represents a contemporary manifestation of a long tradition of renunciants who practice both yoga and asceticism.

Contemporary Practice

In addition to the laxity of caste restrictions, one of the major reasons for the large number of renunciants in the Rāmānanda Sampradāy in comparison to other monastic orders is that its members have a great deal of freedom in crafting their particular lifestyle and set of religious undertakings. The order emphasizes individuality in its concepts and practices, and it inspires its members to work toward crafting a spiritual path specific to their own personality, inclinations, needs, and goals. Moreover, as they progress toward their goals, members are expected to individualize their *sādhana* in ways that define paths unique to themselves. Thus, each Vairāgi is, first and foremost, an individual seeking devotion, realization, and/or liberation. At the same time, he¹⁰ is a member of a strongly knit community of ascetics. These two aspects work together in that the emphasis on individual creativity serves to make the community stronger through the diversity of knowledge, experience, and realization that the individual brings to the collective. Because, the extent and manner of yoga practiced in the order vary widely, most observations provided herein deal more with general tendencies within the order.

Yoga and *tapasya* blend together seamlessly in the life of many Rāmānandī-s. Those who integrate them in their daily *sādhana* generally view yoga and *tapas* as parts of the same process. From the time of *dīkṣā* ('initiation'), Vairāgi-s are taught the importance of both as valuable and powerful tools in a renunciant's life. However, not all Rāmānandī-s use or practice the various methods and techniques in the same manner or to the same extent. While some do little

¹⁰ Since over 99% of Rāmānandī reunuciants are male, male gender pronouns are used throughout in reference to them.

more than give them lip service, others devote a relatively large amount time and energy to learning and undertaking the practices. One's guru, ascetic family,¹¹ and individual personality all influence the degree to which yoga and *tapasya* are learned and incorporated into an individual's *sādhana*. Nevertheless, yoga and austerities are important elements that help give identity and direction to both the order as well as the individual Vairāgi.

Rāja Yoga

Whether or not they practice all the aspects of Rāja Yoga, Rāmānandī-s give deference to the system, and they all formally seek to imbibe in their lives at least the first two limbs, *yama* ('restrictions') and *niyama* ('observances'), which they see as comprising a fundamental set of moral guidelines.¹² Moreover, a new initiate into the order is assumed to have already begun following these before becoming a Rāmānandī. During initiation, the first instruction given him by his *dikṣā guru* (one who gives initial ordination) typically includes one or a series of *mantra*-s for doing *japa* (*mantra* recitation) as well as performing *dhāraṇā* ('concentration') practices, both of which are done as a part of one's daily *sādhana*. Generally, *āsana*-s and *prāṇāyāma* are taught in conjunction with the *mantra*-s, since they are seen as important in helping prepare the body and mind to practice concentration. The combination of these practices helps one to withdraw focus from the things of the world to the things of the *spirit*. In essence, this process is *pratyāhāra*. Therefore, from the outset Vairāgi-s are expected to incorporate aspects of six of the Rāja Yoga limbs as a part of their lifestyle, at least at the basic level. To what extent Rāmānandī-s today practice these on a regular basis is uncertain. Some will admit to having left the practices for different forms of *sādhana*, while others will claim to be, and are, strong practition-

¹¹ Rāmānandī-s define their family in a fashion parallel to birth families. Thus, one's teacher is the 'father' of one's spiritual life, the other disciples of the same teacher become one's guru brothers and sisters, whether or not they are renunciants. One's teacher's teacher is called grandfather guru, the his other disciples become one's uncle or aunt gurus.

¹² These consist of: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, sexual abstinence, non-greed, cleanliness, contentment, self-study, and surrender to God.

ers. Additionally, from time to time, all Rāmānandī-s are expected to perform *anuṣṭhāna*-s, which are vow based sets of ritual performances (see below). Since these often demand greater physical endurance and mental concentration than the normal daily life of a Vairāgi, yogic practices are frequently integrated into such undertakings, because it is believed that these practices will help assure successful fulfillment of the vows undertaken.

Yoga, Vows, and Anuṣṭhāna-s

A Vairāgi's life is framed by the vows and practices he undertakes. When vows are combined with specific forms of *tapasya* for a prolonged period, then the entire process is traditionally known as an 'anuṣṭhāna.' The closest contemporary English translation of the term is 'spiritual retreat,' although this rendering does not capture the real meaning of the term for Rāmānandī-s. During an *anuṣṭhāna*, Vairāgi-s perform specific and intensive disciplines for a predetermined period, which can be anywhere from a few days to a year or more. In doing the various *tapas* for which vows are taken, some yogic practices are inevitably incorporated. For example, a Vairāgi may vow not to eat, or drastically limit his food consumption for a period of a week or a month. He may take a vow to eat only fruit for a specific period. In such cases, specific forms of *prāṇāyāma* and *dhāraṇā* are considered important tools to help stave off hunger pangs as well as provide energy to help fulfill the vow. If one vows to live under no shelter during the rainy season, he may perform yogic practices to help keep warm or get beyond physical discomforts that inevitably occur. If a Vairāgi is inspired to make such practices a permanent part of his life, then he may undertake a further initiation and become a Tyāgi or even a Mahātyāgi. It is here that yoga and *tapasya* find their staunchest adherents among Rāmānandī-s.

Yoga, Tyāgi-s and Mahātyāgi-s

There are a variety of suborders within the Rāmānanda Saṁpradāy that are meant to appeal to, and build on, the diversity of available paths to the divine. Those who desire to pursue a more physically austere lifestyle than that generally experienced in the order have

the option to take initiation as a Tyāgi, literally ‘renunciant.’ The name of this initiatory vow is *khāk dīkṣā* (lit. ‘ash initiation’) and refers to the daily practice of covering one’s bodies with ashes from the sacred fire that is to be regularly maintained. Although all Tyāgi-s wear some cloth, this often consists of little more than a *longoti*, and perhaps a *lungī*, and they typically spend more of their lives roaming throughout the northern and central portions of India than the generally more sedentary Vairāgi-s who have not taken the Tyāgi vow. They say of their lifestyle, ‘*Ramta yogi, bahata pani.*’ Literally translated as, ‘A wandering yogi is like flowing water,’ it expresses the belief that an ascetic who is not tied to a place has fewer attachments and more freedom, both of which are important to the renunciant life.

Integral to the Tyāgi vow is adherence to a set of practices known as ‘*tri tap*,’ or ‘three austerities,’ in which the year is divided into three four-month periods, with a specific daily *tapasya* connected to each period. The first of these austerities done during the four hottest months of the year, is called *dhūnī* (‘sacred fire’) *tap*. It consists of sitting in prayer or meditation surrounded by a set of small fires made of dried cow dung. The practice is to continue for approximately one hour daily during the hottest time of the day and is preceded by a bath and the covering of the body with *dhūnī* ashes. The second *tapas* in the series is known as *maidān* (‘field’) *tap*. Performed throughout the monsoon season, the practice involves foregoing the use of any form of shelter. The obvious consequence is that the Tyāgi is exposed entirely to the elements of nature during that time. The third *tapas* is performed during the coldest time of the year and is known as *jal* (‘water’) *tap*. Tyāgi-s immerse themselves in water up to the waist or even the neck for one hour nightly, between midnight and sunrise. This form of *tapas* is the most hazardous of the *tri tap*, since the cold temperature can cause hypothermia, loss of muscle control, and even drowning.

Sometime during the late nineteenth century, an additional sub-order arose from within the Tyāgi-s, whose vows further increase the practitioner’s degree of physical renunciation. Known as ‘Mahātyāgi-s,’ members of this group take the most physically-restrictive vows of any Hindu renunciant order as a whole. In addition to the Tyāgi vows mentioned above, Mahātyāgi-s also vow to observe the practice of *maidān tap* at all times, to never cut or comb their hair, to wear no cloth, and to limit bodily covering to a *longoti* of banana

tree bark or *mūñja* grass. In addition to the strict vegetarian diet common to all Vairāgi-s, the Mahātyāgi diet additionally omits all grains, many root vegetables, and beans as well. Some members of the suborder will add further restrictions to this already limited dietary practice, such as no milk products or tea.

Because their adopted *sādhana*-s put greater physical and mental demands on Tyāgi-s and Mahātyāgi-s than those of most other Vairāgi-s, there is more emphasis in these suborders on physical conditioning, sharpening of mental focus, and development of a greater will power. Without these, there is far less likelihood of success for Tyāgi-s and Mahātyāgi-s. Even with the increased mental and physical conditioning, many members do not stay in the suborders for a long period, opting instead to return to the general Vairāgi population and practices. Those who persist find that performing the various forms of *tapas* successfully requires a deeper knowledge and practice of yoga as well, so their *sādhana* typically includes several elements of Rāja Yoga, along with certain Tantric practices. In practicing Rāja Yoga, Tyāgi-s and Mahātyāgi-s understand and interpret the various limbs specific to their needs, visions, and *sādhana*. This often results in the addition of both tantric and devotional elements, as described below.

All eight Rāja Yoga limbs are viewed as powerful tools for developing will power (*ātma śakti*) and spiritual energy (*ojas* or *divya śakti*). However, while all aspects of the first two limbs, *yama* and *niyama*, are generally important to Vairāgi-s, Tyāgi-s give them added emphasis, especially with respect to cleanliness, abstinence, and non-greed. To a Tyāgi, any laxity of these is believed to diminish one's will power and valuable spiritual energy and can create sizable obstacles in one's *sādhana*. To help develop and attain these *śakti*-s, both the practice of *āsana*-s and *prāṇāyāma* are considered to be fundamental tools.

Tyāgi-s see both *āsana*-s and *prāṇāyāma* as physical actions that give the practitioner a direct connection to the powers of the mind and spirit. Each yoga posture is believed to have its own *siddhi* (here, 'yogic power'), the attainment of which is dependent up the ability to maintain the pose motionless, with a steady mind, for a specific period of time. With respect to the meditation poses, such as *padmāsana* or *siddhāsana*, Tyāgi-s say that the ability to sit completely motionless and mentally controlled for three and a half hours in either position will grant one the power of that pose. Some other poses require a longer time, while some need much less. The *siddhi*

of *mayūrāsana* (peacock pose) of *hamsāsana* (swan pose), for example, is said to be attainable with less than an hour of perfect practice. The various powers available through the perfection of an *āsana* include such abilities as being able to sleep at any time or not at all, prevent illness, maintain youthful appearance (if desired), and physical strength. Another, and some believe, much stronger tool for gaining focus and power is *prāṇāyāma*.

Prāṇāyāma is undertaken for a variety of reasons. On a physical level, the various types of breath control are done to strengthen the lungs, purify the blood, and relax the body. There are specific breathing practices for focusing the mind, heating or cooling the body, controlling one's heart beat, being able to fast for long periods, being able to assimilate poison without harmful consequences, and so forth. However, Tyāgi-s see the practices as far more powerful and important than to be used simply for these purposes. The most important goal of *prāṇāyāma* consists of awakening the subtle energies within, such as the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* at the base of the spine, cleansing of the *suṣumnā* (an invisible channel that travels up from the base of the spine to the top of the head), and raising the *kuṇḍalinī* energy through this channel until it reaches the energy center, or *cakra*, at the top of the head. However, to accomplish this, other practices that are generally associated with tantra are utilized as well, especially *bandha*-s and visualizations. Tyāgi-s believe that these help awaken, focus, and channel the subtle *ojā śakti*, which is then used to accomplish various physical and psychic feats, such as levitation, mind control, and so forth. Additionally, the focus and power gained helps to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī*. With this comes both power and, hopefully, liberation.

At the same time, the dangers of *prāṇāyāma* are also understood by most Rāmānandī-s. One occasionally hears stories within the order about *sādhus* who became physically incapacitated and/or mentally disturbed through improper breath control practices. Thus, one needs proper training and guidance, an intense commitment, and a potent ability to focus and concentrate, so as not be distracted by the things of the world, or seduced by the powers that are inevitably gained. For this reason, those interested in learning the various forms will generally seek out a well-trained and experienced *sādhū* to be the guru from whom they can learn these practices. Integral to this training and process, *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇā* are both seen as invaluable additions to the Tyāgi's *sādhana*.

Pratyāhāra (the withdrawal of the mind from external sense identification) is viewed by Tyāgi-s as changing sensory input from that of material and external stimuli to internal stimuli, so that one learns how to see, hear, feel and even speak with the Divine within. *Pratyāhāra* is achieved through practices meant to inspire detachment, but the term can also refer to the introspective study of sacred texts. The principal text for the Rāmānandī-s is the *Rāmcaritmānas* (or *Mānas*) of Tulsidās, and the focus is clearly devotional. Some in the order also read and study the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* and various Upaniṣads, including several of the Yoga Upaniṣads. These other texts are used primarily to help develop a greater understanding of the philosophical and practical dimensions of yoga, and of the Self.

Practices used specifically to develop focus and concentration are known as *dhāraṇā*. Generally speaking, this limb consists of specific techniques used to slow the wavering mind and bring it under control. In the West, such practices are often referred to as ‘meditation.’ *Dhāraṇā* may involve concentration on a thought or a sensation, or it may include the repetition of a *mantra*, such as *Śrī Rāma śaraṇam mama* (‘Lord Rām, you are my refuge’). The latter is seen not only to develop concentration but to stimulate awareness of and a closer relationship with the Divine within. Here, the power believed to be inherent in the sound of the *mantra* is believed to help bring about focus and awareness.

To the Rāmānandī-s the last two Rāja yoga limbs, i.e. *dhyāna* and *samādhi*, are not practices as much as they are states of mind and being and thus cannot be taught. They can only be attained. For Vairāgi-s, *dhyāna* occurs as perception, awareness, recognition, and remembrance of one’s true nature which gradually becomes manifest. Once this state is realized and integrated into one’s daily existence, then the individual is able to see beyond the duality of the physical and material world and achieve realization of the Self as united with Rāma. This state, according to Rāmānandī-s, is *samādhi*. It is characterized by a transcendence of the wavering mind, focused and enlightened awareness, complete equanimity of thought, and true peace. This is simultaneously the goal of yoga, of *tapas*, and of *bhakti*. It is the epitome of existence.

Conclusion

Until the last few decades, most of the *mahant*-s, or leaders, of the Rāmānanda Saṃpradāy have typically come from the ranks of practicing Tyāgi-s. Since that time, however, a gradual shift in emphasis has occurred in the higher ranks of the order in the direction of philosophical study and away from large scale involvement in austerities and yogic practices. This de-emphasis on *tapas* has had its effect on the membership, which seems to be following in a similar direction. In its place, study of Sanskrit and Sanskrit scriptures has become a more common part of the *sādhana* of many Vairāgi-s, resulting in a gradual transformation of the order as a whole. The resulting form is much more functionally parallel to the present-day Sannyāsi and Rāmānuja renunciant traditions, both of which are highly brahmanized. This ‘brahmanization’ can be seen not only in the order’s direction and *sādhana* practices, but also in the values being adopted, and even in the Rāmānandī dress. The dominant color for Vairāgi clothing has traditionally been white. Currently, however, a quarter or more have taken to wearing ochre and related colors, somewhat similar to Sannyāsi garments. At the same time, the Tyāgi and Mahātyāgi subgroups have drastically decreased in numbers, as have the practices they undertake.

Consequently, as the practice and role of *tapasya* gradually diminish in the order, there is a similar effect on Rāja Yoga for the Rāmānandī-s. Yet, one form of yoga is still strong and will likely always endure, and that is *bhakti* yoga. Devotion to the divine in the aspect of Lord Rām remains central to Rāmānandī life, for renunciants and householders alike. As previously mentioned, this coupling of yoga and *bhakti* dates back at least to the time of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and it has been a recurrent theme in various texts and movements ever since. Ultimately, it is this aspect of yoga that most Rāmānandī-s see as the highest form of practice. Moreover, even Rāja Yoga has often been used in the order as a vehicle for helping to establish one in the path and practice of devotion. For this reason, many Tyāgi-s perform deity worship in conjunction with their yoga and other austerity practices. For Rāmānandī-s, then, *bhakti* is not only a path, but for many it is also the goal. Devotion to and love of the Divine can take many forms. An elder Tyāgi once mused about the ascetic path, ‘Devotion to Rām and eating are all that are important. Anyone who does anything else is but a fool.’ Tulsidās puts

into the words of Bharat a commonly recited verse from the *Mānas* that expresses the view held by many Vairāgi-s with respect to their ultimate goal of life:

Wealth, pleasure, religious merit, and liberation, none of these are my aim.
Birth after birth, all that I want is devotion to the feet of Lord Rām.¹³

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¹³ *Rāmcaritmānas* (2.204).

IN KAPILA'S CAVE: A SĀṂKHYA-YOGA RENAISSANCE IN BENGAL

Knut A. Jacobsen

Abstract

A striking number of the leading religious figures in the 19th and 20th century Bengal, many of whom gained pan-Indian or international fame, had a strong interest in yoga, and many of these religious thinkers were interested in and gave interpretations of Sāṁkhya-Yoga. Few of them, however, were practitioners of this yoga tradition. The most significant Sāṁkhya-Yoga thinker of this period was Hariharānanda Āraṇya who was a yogin, a Sanskritist and a prolific writer, and around whom devotees and associates founded a small *maṭha*. A unique feature of this tradition is that the living guru isolates himself permanently in a cave. The essay places this movement in a historical context and analyses the meaning of the cave tradition of this living Sāṁkhya-Yoga *maṭha*.

To most historians of religions and indologists, Sāṁkhya-Yoga is a system of philosophy that flourished and became extinct a long time ago. This philosophical system is not usually associated with the living Hindu tradition. That there is a living Sāṁkhya-Yoga tradition in India may therefore come as a surprise to some. The centre of this living tradition is Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur in Jharkhand.¹ An *āśrama* in Sarnath outside of Varanasi called the Sāṁkhyayogāśrama, is also related to this organisation. This small tradition is the largest organisation of the Sāṁkhya-Yoga system of religious thought in India today, and perhaps its only living tradition.² Kāpil Maṭh owes its existence to the scholar-monk Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947),

¹ In his *Classical Sāṁkhya*, 2nd rev. ed. (Santa Barbara: Ross/Eriksen, 1979), 278, Gerald James Larson gave a short one-page summary of this tradition based on the information supplied by Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. This is probably the first account of the tradition in the indological literature.

² The author has encountered other small *maṭha*-s and ascetics in India calling themselves Sāṁkhya-yoga and Sāṁkhya-yogins. What the content of their teaching is, however, remains to be investigated.

its founding figure and one of the greatest thinkers in the late 19th and early 20th century India. Hariharānanda Āraṇya's Sanskrit commentaries have become authoritative texts of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system of religious thought. He is perhaps the only known Sāṃkhya-yogin of the 20th century 'whose exposition of Sāṃkhya-yoga has been accepted by scholars of modern times as highly authoritative as well as original.'³

Hariharānanda Āraṇya was from Kolkata (Calcutta) and most of his followers were, and are, Bengalis. It is probably no exaggeration to say that he produced a small renaissance for Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the twentieth century Bengal. Hariharānanda Āraṇya spent the last part of his life in Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur, which was established for him by his disciples. After the death of Hariharānanda Āraṇya in 1947, his disciple Dharmamegha Āraṇya became the living guru of the movement. Dharmamegha Āraṇya was not a composer of Sanskrit works like his guru, but a yogin who also devoted much of his time counselling and advising devotees in the form of letters and talks.

A distinguishing characteristic of this tradition is that their guru or *ācārya* lives permanently in an artificial cave, the cave of Kapila, constructed inside a building of the Maṭh. The guru never goes outside of the cave. The only means of contact between the guru and the devotees is through a small window opening in the hall of the building. Hariharānanda Āraṇya lived in the cave more than 20 years, Dharmamegha Āraṇya more than 30, and the current guru Bhāskara Āraṇya has been living in this cave for more than 20 years. The essay will present some aspects of this living Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition, and in particular the Kāpil Cave (Kāpil *guphā*).⁴ Why does the guru live in a cave? How does it connect to the teaching of Sāṃkhya? And how did the idea of Kapila's cave originate?

Sāṃkhya-Yoga

During the last one hundred years yoga has attained world wide fame. The global yoga market has attracted millions of students and

³ Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, 'Foreword' Dharmamegha Āraṇya, *Epistles of a Sāṃkhya-Yogin* (Madhupur: Kāpil Maṭh, 1989), ix.

⁴ The essay is based on fieldwork in Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur, interviews with devotees and a study of the publications of the Maṭh in English and Sanskrit.

practitioners. Sāṃkhya has in the same period been mainly neglected and has received little attention outside of the academia. That classical yoga was a school of Sāṃkhya and that Sāṃkhya is at the foundation of yoga is unknown or unrecognised by many modern yoga movements.

Sāṃkhya was for many hundred years the dominant *mokṣaśāstra* or philosophy of salvation in the Hindu tradition. From the time of the composition of the didactic parts of the *Mahābhārata* until the time of the philosophy of Śaṅkara, Sāṃkhya was probably the most influential of the Hindu *mokṣaśāstra*-s. This did not necessarily mean acceptance of all the doctrines as they appear in classical Sāṃkhya, but rather acceptance of its style of philosophising, that is, of mapping the world in terms of a hierarchy of *tattva*-s with *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as fundamental principles.⁵ The method of identifying the principles of reality (*tattva*-s) in a hierarchical order was followed by most Hindu schools of religious thought, even after Sāṃkhya had lost its influence as an independent school. The *tattva*-s indicated a salvific path to the highest reality as well as the structure of the cosmic order. In theistic thought the *tattva*-s indicated the order of emanation of the divine principle. This style of philosophising is omnipresent in the texts of the Hindu tradition. It dominates the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇa*-s, the medical texts, and most of the theological systems of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism and the Tantric tradition.

As is well known, Śaṅkara made Sāṃkhya the main target of criticism in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. Śaṅkara had to refute the Upaniṣadic basis of the doctrines of Sāṃkhya to prove that his non-dualistic interpretation was the only message supported by the revealed scripture. He considered Sāṃkhya the strongest of his opponents and therefore, by refuting Sāṃkhya, all opposing schools were refuted, he claimed. Śaṅkara's main criticism against Sāṃkhya was of *prakṛti* as an ultimate principle and as the material cause of the world.⁶ For Śaṅkara there is no real material stuff of which the world is made

⁵ The term Sāṃkhya in the oldest sources meant probably just a style of philosophising. See Franklin Edgerton, 'The meaning of Sāṃkhya and Yoga,' *American Journal of Philology*, 45, no 1 (1924): 1–46.

⁶ Śaṅkara's refutation of Sāṃkhya is found in the commentary on the *sūtra*-s 1.1.5–11, 1.4.1–28, 2.1.1–2.1.11, 2.2.1–10.

next to the *puṛuṣa*-s.⁷ The success of Śaṃkara and Vedānta was probably one of the reasons for the decay of Sāṃkhya.

Many teachers and schools have contributed to Sāṃkhya. A few names such as Kapila, Āsuri and Pañcaśikha are associated with the early Sāṃkhya development, but these early figures are known only through mythology. Later the classical school of Sāṃkhya philosophy was summarised and given its authoritative interpretation in the text *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. As Larson has suggested this marks the end of the creative period of Sāṃkhya philosophy and not the beginning.⁸

While classical Sāṃkhya was, and is, a style of philosophising for the purpose of eliminating ignorance (*avidyā*), Classical Yoga is a method of concentration, but with the same ultimate goal as Sāṃkhya. Yoga includes many elements such as mental concentration, ethics, breathing exercises, body postures, and these might have different origins and histories. There were, and are, many traditions of yoga. The ultimate goal of most forms of yoga, however, is the same, the attainment of *samādhi* or *nirodha*, the cessation of the transformation of awareness (*cittavṛttinirodha*) and the attainment of *mokṣa*.

Sāṃkhya and Yoga in all probability started as different traditions, and they have remained for the most part separate. Nevertheless, in the history of the Hindu tradition Sāṃkhya and Yoga have also merged several times. Such tendencies are found already in the *Mahābhārata*. While Sāṃkhya and Yoga in the *Mahābhārata* often are conceived of as different traditions, other verses state that Sāṃkhya and Yoga are the same:

*yad eva yogāḥ paśyanti sāmkyais tad anugamyate
ekam sāmkyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa buddhimān* (12.293.30).

What the yogis see is the same as the supporters of Sāṃkhya know.
He is a wise person who sees that Sāṃkhya and Yoga are the same.

This verse is perhaps the earliest evidence of someone arguing that Sāṃkhya and Yoga are one. Sāṃkhya and Yoga in the *Mahābhārata*

⁷ Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1 (1922, reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975).

⁸ See Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds., *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol. IV (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 18.

do not refer to the classical traditions but probably to certain practices that are precursors to these traditions. The paradigmatic example of a systematic bringing together of Sāṃkhya and Yoga is in the Yoga school of philosophy (Yoga Darśana or Pātañjala Yoga). In this school, several traditions of Yoga were brought together in the systematic framework of Sāṃkhya philosophy. This merging is perhaps more evident in the commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, the *Vyāsabhāṣya*, than in the *sūtra*-s themselves. In the medieval period when the doctrine of the six *darśana*-s had become established, the six systems were treated as three groups of two. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, and Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā, were grouped together, and likewise Sāṃkhya and Yoga were joined. However, many new forms of yoga developed: haṭha-yoga, mantra-yoga, tantra-yoga, bhakti-yoga and so on. These new forms of yoga did not accept the Sāṃkhya philosophy of an ultimate dualism between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, although the *tattva*-s usually were acknowledged. The reason for this might be that Sāṃkhya by this time had lost its position in the Hindu tradition, and Vedānta and theism had become the dominant systems of religious thought. However, in the medieval times the philosopher Vijñānabhikṣu created a small revitalisation of Sāṃkhya. A characteristic feature of his philosophy was the merging of Sāṃkhya and Yoga and the mythology of the *Purāṇa*-s. But the impact of his philosophy was limited. So although Yoga sometimes was joined with Sāṃkhya, and Classical Yoga was a school of Sāṃkhya, yoga has had a history of its own. Yoga was joined with many traditions in India that were not technical yoga schools as such.

Yoga has traditionally been associated with asceticism and renunciation. Its emphasis is on practice. We know what yogins do. What constitutes the religious practice of the followers of the Sāṃkhya system of religious thought, however, is less clear. The Sāṃkhya gurus seem to have been renunciants and ascetics, but who their followers were and details about their religious practice are to a large degree unknown. The Sāṃkhyans described in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇa*-s such as Kapila and Āsuri are presented as divine or mythical beings. While Yoga is associated with a more or less well defined practice, the activities of the followers of Sāṃkhya are not usually described in the classical Sāṃkhya texts. We do not know much about them.

Sāṃkhya and Sāṃkhya-Yoga texts and commentaries have been produced throughout the history of the Hindu tradition, but many

of the texts were probably not written by practising Sāṃkhya-yogins. They were written by pandits and scholars interested in the philosophy. Although we do not know much about many of the authors, we know that some of the texts were written by philosophers who were not Sāṃkhya-yogins but who produced them as scholarly philosophical exercises. Vācaspati Miśra's commentary *Tattvakaumudī*, the most used commentary at the universities in India, is an example of a non-Sāṃkhyan explaining Sāṃkhya, his *Tattvavaiśārādī*, a non-yogin explaining yoga. Most likely many Sāṃkhya texts were written for similar purposes by scholars who were not yogins.

A similar example in the 20th century, in Bengal, was the well-known Surendranath Dasgupta. He was one of the foremost academic writers on the history and interpretation of Sāṃkhya-Yoga in India in the first half of the 20th century. Dasgupta gained world wide fame as a historian of Indian philosophy and as a scholar of Sāṃkhya and Yoga. Dasgupta was also the teacher of the historian of religions Mircea Eliade in Calcutta. Eliade's monograph on Yoga, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, became the scholarly authoritative scripture on Yoga for a period among scholars in the West. Dasgupta, however, had little experience with Sāṃkhya-Yoga as a personal religious practice. He was a scholar and not a Sāṃkhya-Yogin. This is no judgement of the quality of his interpretations, but an indication that his scholarship does not give much insight into the religious practice of the Sāṃkhya-yogins.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the 19th and 20th Century Bengal

Bengal was the centre of the Hindu religious renaissance of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. A remarkable number of religious movements were established in Bengal in this period, some traditional, other aiming at religious reform. Many of them were yoga movements. Many of them were influenced by the dramatic cultural change of the period. Three types of movements in modern Bengal have been distinguished.⁹ Firstly, movements that had an impact on the whole Bengali society. The most important mass move-

⁹ Benoy Gopal Ray, *Religious Movements in Modern Bengal* (Santiniketan: Visva Bharati, 1965).

ments were the Brahmo Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission. Secondly, religious organisations that had followers from a large section of society. Bhārat Sevāśrama Saṃgha is an example of this type. And thirdly, some disciples that gathered around a guru and founded an *āśrama*. These disciples worshipped the guru and followed his orders, but no attempt was made to give the *āśrama* a strict organisational form. Ray noted that 'the number of such Gurus in Bengal is enormous. Hardly a village is seen that does not contain one or two Gurus.'¹⁰

Surendranath Dasgupta's interest in Sāṃkhya-Yoga seems to have been part of a larger fascination with Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the late 19th, early 20th century Bengal. A striking number of the leading religious figures of the late 19th and early 20th century Bengal were interested in Yoga: Rāmākṣṇa, Vivekānanda, Aurobindo, Paramahansa Yogānanda, Praṇavānanda, Anirvan, Ānandamayī Mā, just to mention a few of those who attained Pan-Indian or international fame and recognition. Several of these Bengali religious thinkers were interested in and gave interpretations of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, although they often understood their own philosophy in terms of the Vedānta systems of religious thought. Their interpretations of Sāṃkhya differ in remarkable ways. Vivekānanda (1863–1902) promoted the term yoga in his writings and popularised the term Rāja-Yoga for the eightfold yoga (*aṣṭāṅga yoga*) described in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, and published an introduction to Yoga with a translation of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* with a commentary. Here he stated that the whole of Rāja-Yoga is based on the Sāṃkhya philosophy.¹¹ He further maintained that 'the points of difference' between Sāṃkhya and Yoga were 'very few'.¹² Vivekānanda added to the prestige of Pātañjala Yoga by promoting it as Rāja-Yoga and by contributing a commentary on the *Yogasūtra*. Vivekānanda had great influence and his statement that Yoga was based on Sāṃkhya probably contributed to generate interest in Sāṃkhya-Yoga.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) was a practitioner of yoga and wrote several books on the topic. In 1908 after experiencing a lack

¹⁰ Ibid., p. iii.

¹¹ Vivekananda, *Raja-Yoga or Conquering the Internal Nature* (Reprint: Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2004), 13.

¹² *Raja Yoga*, p. x.

of progress in his practice, he sought the advise of a guru 'who showed him how to silence the activities of his mind.'¹³ This refers probably to *cittavṛttinirodha*, the definition of Yoga according to *Yogasūtra*. This instruction 'opened him to the experience of the impersonal Brahman or Absolute' and was 'the first fundamental realisation of his yoga.'¹⁴ In fact, Aurobindo wanted the Hindu tradition to be replaced by Yoga.¹⁵

Another of the 20th century Bengali saints, Anirvan (1896–1978), was a follower and teacher of a doctrine he called Sāṃkhya. He started his career as a Sāṃkhya teacher in an *āśrama* inspired by the thoughts of Vivekānanda.¹⁶ He was an admirer of Aurobindo and the Sāṃkhya he taught was probably influenced also by his teaching. Anirvan's Sāṃkhya differs from the Sāṃkhya system of religious thought. Anirvan argues that there are two Sāṃkhyas, one philosophical, the other mystical.¹⁷ The 'mystical Sāṃkhya' he identifies with Tantra.¹⁸ Anirvan favours the 'mystical Sāṃkhya.' Śakti therefore becomes important in his thinking, as in Aurobindo's. The Sāṃkhya concepts are present in his writings, but the Classical Sāṃkhya tradition is absent. None of these were practitioners within the tradition of Sāṃkhya-Yoga.

Kāpil Maṭh

The Kāpil Maṭh belongs to the third group in Roy's typology: an *āśrama* founded by disciples who gathered around a guru, although the *āśrama* these days is better organised than what his typology suggests. Kāpil Maṭh's founding guru, the foremost philosopher of Sāṃkhya-Yoga in modern Bengal, Hariharānanda Āraṇya, was known only among a small group of disciples and remained for a long time

¹³ Peter Hechs, "The Error of All "Churches": Religion and Spirituality in Communities Founded or "Inspired" by Sri Aurobindo,' in *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, ed. Antony Copley (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 209–224. Quote from p. 212.

¹⁴ Hechs, 'The Error of All "Churches",' 212.

¹⁵ *Birth Centenary Library*, 3, p. 437.

¹⁶ Anirvan, *The Buddhiyoga of the Gītā* (Delhi: Biblia Implex, 1983).

¹⁷ Shri Anirvan, 'Talks on Sāṃkhya' in Lizelle Raymond, *To Live Within* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 77–238.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

unknown outside of a small circle. That Roy did not mention him in his *Religious Movements in Modern Bengal* is an example of his lack of fame. It is perhaps more peculiar that Surendranath Dasgupta never made any references to him or his many books. This probably means that he was unknown to Dasgupta and explains perhaps how Dasgupta's student Mircea Eliade could make some major mistakes in his interpretation of Sāṃkhya-Yoga.¹⁹ Surendranath Dasgupta late in life married the much younger Surama Dasgupta, a student of Indian philosophy. Surama Dasgupta had visited Madhupur and Hariharāṇḍa Āraṇya many times during her childhood, was initiated in the movement, and she spent her last years as a widow in the Kāpil Maṭh. Essays by her are included in the publications of the Maṭh.²⁰

While Surendranath Dasgupta got his authority from scholarship, Hariharāṇḍa Āraṇya got his authority both from practice and scholarship. He was not only a practitioner of yoga, but a philosopher of the Sāṃkhya system of religious thought and a prolific writer of texts in Bengali and Sanskrit that have been accepted in the classical Sanskrit tradition. He authored more than 20 books. He is considered a saint by his followers, and is respected as a scholar and admired for his proficiency in Sanskrit by Sanskrit pandits in India today. Hariharāṇḍa Āraṇya was a contemporary of Vivekānanda and Aurobindo, but he never gained fame outside of a very small circle. His reputation in this circle is based on his writings in Sanskrit and Bengali, his ascetic lifestyle, his kindness and his personal charisma. He was uninterested in fame and he even forbid his disciples to write his biography.²¹ Disciples gathered around him and founded an *āśrama* and thus originated a lineage of gurus and a small organisation that conserved his heritage. The second guru, Dharmamegha Āraṇya, was significant in the sense that he himself was a great ascetic, he seems to have cared much for the devotees and he gained new disciples for the movement. He devoted much time to instruct devotees,

¹⁹ See Knut A. Jacobsen, 'The Anthropocentric Bias in Eliade's Interpretation of the Sāṃkhya and Sāṃkhya-Yoga Systems of Religious Thought,' *Religion* 25 (1995): 213–225.

²⁰ Appendix D and E in *Way to Eternal Peace* (Madhupur: Kāpil Math, 2001). 60–79.

²¹ Adinath Chatterjee, 'Preface' in Dharmamegha Āraṇya, *Epistles of a Sāṃkhya-Yogin* (Madhupur: Kāpil Math, 1989), xiv.

and that he conscientiously answered all questions from them, in letters, shows how much he cared for them. Dharmamegha continued the heritage and developed the teaching of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, especially its ethical side. Under Bhāskara Āraṇya, the third guru, the movement has initiated a program of publication of English translations of the writings in Sanskrit and Bengali of the *maṭha*. In addition, a beautiful garden has been developed around the buildings housing the cave and the dwellings for the monks. A statue of Kapila has been put up in the garden. This reflects Bhāskara Āraṇya's interest in making the teaching of his two predecessors better known and his interest in aesthetics.

The Kāpil Cave: The Practice of Sāṃkhya-Yoga

A distinct feature of the tradition of the Kāpil Maṭh is that the gurus isolate themselves permanently in an artificial cave which they never leave. These are self-imposed solitary confinements. The cave is called Kāpil Cave and is constructed inside a building of the Maṭh. The only means of contact between the guru and the devotees is through a small window opening in the hall of the building. It is not unusual in the Hindu tradition that sādhu-s isolate themselves in caves for a period of intense meditation that may last for several years, but it is unusual that sādhu-s take the vow never ever to leave the cave. On the contrary, often a time of isolation is followed by a time of intense activity of teaching and consultation. It is common in India for sādhu-s to move around for large parts of the year. Permanent isolation in a cave is not part of the teaching of Kapila known through the texts, but seems to be an innovation of the Kāpil Maṭh.

The goal of Sāṃkhya-Yoga is isolation of the self, the *puruṣa*, from materiality, *prakṛti*, and its products. Isolation of the guru in the cave clearly symbolises and mirrors the isolation of the self from materiality. It is a method to realise this isolation of the self and at the same time a statement of faith in the doctrine. The self is absolutely contentless, passive, and is separated from everything else. It is a pure witness, a sheer presence, independent and uninvolved. Realisation of the self means therefore to realise the self as something it already is, independent and separate from materiality. When all the changes

in the mental organ (*citta*) cease, the self is established in itself and all connections with the world are severed. Even God, Īśvara, is an eternally isolated self. Īśvara is a special self that has never been bound or involved in materiality. It is pure, full of bliss and established in calm isolation.

Hariharānanda Āraṇya before he entered the cave in Madhupur spent many years in caves and *āśrama*-s in northern India. He lived for six years in a cave in the Barabar hills in Bihar. Many of these hills date back to the period of Aśoka. His disciple Dharmamegha Āraṇya has described the life of Hariharānanda Āraṇya in the Barabar hills:

Swamiji passed his early monastic life (1892–1898) in the caves of Barabar hills in Bihar, where his earthly resources consisted only of a blanket, a thick cotton sheet, a single piece of dhoti, a napkin and wooden Kamandulu (water-pot). In those days that solitary mountainous region was the home of wild animals. So dangerous was this place that even 30 years thereafter, shepherds used to leave that hilly pasture-ground with their flock and return home long before sunset. But Swamiji never took any special steps for his safety, he had only a cloth-screen at the entrance to the cave to keep out the wind and the rain.

He thereafter lived in several places in the Himalayas, in Rishikesh, Haridwar and Kursheong, and in Triveni in Bengal.

Hariharānanda Āraṇya in his small book *A Unique Travelogue: An Allegorical Exploration of Spirituality and Yoga*, a book that is partly fiction, partly self-biographical, refers to a conversation he had with his preceptor who was living in a cave-like room on the hillside somewhere in the Nilgiri Hills. The preceptor asked:

‘Why does a liberated soul have to seek refuge in caves and forests for hundreds of years? Is there any such examples in Scripture?’ I said, ‘no’. [. . .] One day I asked him ‘If sages do not live in forests or caves, why are you living in such a solitary place.’ He said ‘You have not followed me properly. There is a common belief that just as ‘touch me not’ plants are too sensitive, so also are sages. So they live in solitude to avoid people. But this is entirely wrong. In fact to a liberated soul, the city and forest are at par with each other. But for those who are engaged in spiritual practice and have not yet reached the goal, solitude is absolutely necessary. [. . .] only those who are pure in mind can stay in solitude. Ordinary people lose their balance of mind under such circumstances. Ignorant people believe that greed

disappears in solitude. But it is not that. In solitude only those with power of introspection can successfully fight to eradicate the roots of all desire.²²

In this answer from the preceptor the ideal of cave-dwelling is clearly stated. In fact, when Hariharānanda Āraṇya many years after he had written these words entered the cave May 14, 1926, he read a few lines of the text just quoted aloud for the devotees.²³

But why was the cave named Kāpil Cave (Kāpil *guphā*)? The small buildings raised in Triveni, Kursheong and Madhupur were all named after Kapila: Kāpilāśram and Kāpil Maṭh. Sāṃkhya-Yoga considers Kapila and not Hiraṇyagarbha or Patañjali as its founder. In the texts of Kāpil Maṭh, Sāṃkhya is emphasised as the worldview, and yoga is the practice and method to realise the Sāṃkhya teaching. The one great festival celebrated at the Kāpil Maṭh each year is the Kāpila *utsava*, the festival of Kapila. That the emphasis in the rituals is on Kapila rather than Patañjali shows that Kapila is the most important figure in Sāṃkhya-Yoga and that Sāṃkhya is considered the main basis of Yoga. The emphasis is on Sāṃkhya as a tradition of yoga. The stress on Kapila in the tradition of Hariharānanda Āraṇya is rooted in an understanding that Pātañjala Yoga was a school of Sāṃkhya, and that therefore Kapila's teaching is at the foundation of both Sāṃkhya and Yoga.

The idea of the cave of Kapila is founded on first, the understanding of Kapila's teaching at the basis of both Sāṃkhya and Yoga and second, probably, the sacred geography of Kapila. The sacred geography of Kapila is to a large degree an oral tradition, although a few of the places have written Māhātmyas.²⁴ Hariharānanda Āraṇya

²² Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *A Unique Travelogue: An Allegorical Exploration of Spirituality and Yoga* (Madhupur: Kāpil Maṭh, 2001), pp. 14, 16.

²³ See 'Entering the Kāpil Cave,' in Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Progressive and Practical Sāṃkhya-Yoga* (Madhupur: Kāpil Maṭh, 2003), 147–150.

²⁴ Of the sacred places of Kapila I have found Māhātmyas only about Sidhpur, Gaṅgā Sāgar and Kolāyat. On the sacred geography of Kapila, see Knut A. Jacobsen, 'Matrgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha: Pilgrimsferd til Sidhpur for å gi frelse til avdøde mødre,' *Chaos* 39 (2003): 49–58; Knut A. Jacobsen 'The Sacred Geography of Kapila: The Kapilāśrama of Sidhpur,' *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* vol 18: *Ritualistics*, (2003), 82–91; and the forthcoming Knut A. Jacobsen, 'Sanskrit Hymns in the Worship of Kapila in Contemporary Hindu Tradition.' in Bruno Dagens & Petteri Koskikallio eds., *Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference*, held in Helsinki, Finland, 13–18 July,

was in contact with this sacred geography in several ways. A connection can be established between Hariharānanda Āraṇya and Kapila at Gaṅgā Sāgar through his initiation. Hariharānanda Āraṇya was initiated in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition at Gaṅgā Sāgar by Swami Trilokī Āraṇya. Nothing is known about him. Gaṅgā Sāgar is one of the most important sacred places of Kapila in India. Gaṅgā Sāgar is an island in the Bay of Bengal situated at the place where the river Gaṅgā joins the ocean. This is the place where Kapila is believed to have built his hermitage and carried out meditation and to have reduced to ashes the sons of Sagara. According to the tradition of Gaṅgā Sāgar, this Kapila is the same as the founder of the Sāṃkhya system.²⁵ Many of those who worship Kapila at Gaṅgā Sāgar probably assume this Kapila to be also the Sāṃkhya sage. The main temple on Sāgar Island is a Kapila temple and the participants in the main festival at Makara Saṃkrānti try their best to pay homage to him here. The Gaṅgā Sāgar festival is one of the greatest bathing festivals in India and the greatest bathing festival celebrated in West Bengal. Ascetics from all regions of India come for the *melā*.

In the sacred narrative of how the river Gaṅgā came to earth, Kapila played a significant part. When the sacrificial horse of king Sagara was stolen, the sons went looking for the horse and almost destroyed the earth. They arrived at the place in which Kapila was performing *tapas* and found the horse tied to a tree next to him. Assuming Kapila to be the horse thief, they accused him of having stolen it. Kapila then killed the sons of Sagara with a fire coming from his own body. The relatives of the sons of Sagara were told that since the sage Kapila had caused their death, the sons would not attain heaven if ordinary water was used in the *śrāddha* ritual. Only water from the river Gaṅgā was pure enough to bring the sons of Sagara to heaven. It is Kapila's role in the Gaṅgā myth that has made the Sāgar Island a sacred place for Kapila worship. In the main temple of the Gaṅgā Sāgar, the Kapil *mandir*, are three *mūrti*-s next to each other. In the middle Kapila is seated in the *padmāsana*

2003, Vol. 3.1., general editors, Petteri Koskikallio & Asko Parpola (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass), and the monograph Knut A. Jacobsen, *Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, forthcoming).

²⁵ Taruṇadev Bhaṭṭācārya, *Gaṅgāsāgar Melā* (Calcutta: Parma KLM, 1986) (in Hindi).

(lotus position). To the right of Kapila is a *mūrti* of Gaṅgā sitting on a crocodile with a small statue of Bhagiratha on her lap. On the left side is the *mūrti* of King Sagara. The statues are painted brightly red.

H. H. Wilson gave an interesting description of the rituals at Gaṅgā Sāgar hundred and fifty years ago:

In front of the temple was a banyan tree, beneath which were images of Rāma and Hanumān. The pilgrims commonly wrote their names on the walls of the temple, with a short prayer to Kapila, or suspended a piece of earth or brick to a bough of the tree, with some solicitations, as for health, or affluence, or offspring, and promised, if their prayers are granted, to make a gift to some divinity.²⁶

It is noteworthy that people wrote prayers to Kapila for offspring, health and material wealth. This shows the importance of Kapila at this place. At the time Wilson was writing, the festival was attended by one hundred thousand persons, according to his estimations. Nowhere in India is the worship of Kapila more popular than at Gaṅgā Sāgar. These days more than five hundred thousand persons participate.

Today there are many *āśrama*-s of ascetics at the Gaṅgā Sāgar. The belief that Kapila previously performed *tapas* at this place, has influenced the names of the *āśrama*-s here. Many have names connected to Kapila and Sāṃkhya such as Kapil Samkhya Yoga Ashram and Kapil Kudīr Sāṃkhya Yoga Āśrama.²⁷ That there were Sāṃkhya-Yoga ascetics and Sāṃkhya-Yoga *āśrama*-s here also hundred years ago is most likely. That Hariharānanda Āraṇya was initiated at this sacred place might have been significant for his naming his own *āśrama*-s after Kapila.

The Cave of Kapila might be thought of as a complete innovation since there is no mention of such a cave in the scriptures of Sāṃkhya and Sāṃkhya-Yoga. However, there is a Kāpil Cave in Gayā in Bihar. Just outside of Gayā there is a temple and monastery with many buildings called Kapiladhārā. The main temple is built

²⁶ H. H. Wilson, *Essays on the Religion of the Hindus* (1862), vol. 2, quoted in the *Bengal District Gazetteer: 24 Parganas*, ed., L. S. S. O'Malley (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1914), 256.

²⁷ To what degree the *āśrama*-s follow the teaching of Sāṃkhya-Yoga needs further study.

on top of a small cave. This cave is called Kapila's Cave, Kāpil *guphā*. According to the tradition of Kapiladhārā, Kapila enclosed himself in meditation in it. At the Kapiladhārā, in Gayā is also a *samādhisthāna* believed by the monks and nuns staying there today to be Kapila's. It is quite possible that Kāpil *guphā* in Gayā is the model of the Cave of Kapila in Madhupur. Hariharānanda Āraṇya most likely visited the Kāpil *guphā* at Kapiladhārā in Gayā, since he already was familiar with the worship of Kapila at Gaṅgā Sāgar and because, as a follower of Sāṃkhya, he would be interested in a place connected to its founder. He stayed close to Gayā in Barabar hills for six years, and if he did not know about Kapiladhārā beforehand, someone probably must have informed him since he was known to be a Sāṃkhya-Yogin. This Kapila's cave was perhaps a model and a main motivation for the establishment of the cave tradition at Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur. Both caves are called Kāpil Cave, Kāpil *guphā*.

Kapila's cave in the Kapiladhārā in Gayā shows that there is a cave tradition in Sāṃkhya-Yoga. This tradition is not found in the classical texts. However it is found in the sacred geography of Kapila and in the oral tradition. Hariharānanda Āraṇya by entering Kapila's Cave, therefore, did not invent a new tradition. He continued a tradition about Kapila manifested in the sacred geography of Kapila and in the oral tradition.

Although Hariharānanda Āraṇya was a great yogin and philosopher and emphasised knowledge, there is an emphasis these days in the Kāpil Maṭh on devotion and an interest for the worship of Kapila. In the Hindu tradition, 'the positive corollary of detachment is attachment to holy men or God'.²⁸ In the beautiful garden surrounding the temple are the *samādhisthāna*-s of Hariharānanda Āraṇya and Dharmamegha Āraṇya. Next to the *samādhisthāna*-s is a large statue of Kapila. He stands surrounded by beautiful wild animals. The greatest yearly gathering at the Maṭh is for Kapila *pūjā* in December at Winter solstice. At this gathering hymns are sung and the story of Kapila called *Siddhānām kapilo muniḥ gītā* composed by Hariharānanda Āraṇya, is read aloud in the temple. Many hundred people are fed in the garden outside of the temple. The same sacred

²⁸ Deepti Dutta, *Sāṃkhya: A Prologue to Yoga* (Madhupur: Kapil Math, 2001), 61.

story of Kapila is read at the Makara Saṃkrānti. Since Makara Saṃkrānti is the main festival day at the Gaṅgā Sāgar, this day is considered sacred to Kapila also at Kāpil Maṭh. Such is the power of the sacred geography.

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RAISING KRISHNA WITH LOVE:
MATERNAL DEVOTION AS A FORM OF YOGA
IN A WOMEN'S RITUAL TRADITION

Tracy Pintchman

Lord Krishna said: Those who fix their minds on me, who are eternally steadfast and worship me, who are endowed with supreme faith—I consider them to be the most disciplined (*Bhagavad-Gītā* 12.2).

Abstract

During the Hindu month of Kartik, which falls during autumn, women in the North Indian city of Benares perform a special, daily *pūjā* ('ritual worship') to Krishna. This essay explores the nature of this *pūjā* tradition as a form of yoga. Yoga is understood in this context in broad, popular terms as referring to various forms of religious discipline that entail asceticism (*tapas*), self-denial, and selfless devotional love directed toward another and that serve to promote individual spiritual growth. In particular, this essay focuses on the portrayal of motherhood as it surfaces in Kartik *pūjā* practices and the ways that imagery of mothering and raising children taps into values often associated with yogic traditions.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is well-known for its exposition of the practice of theistic devotion, *bhakti*, as a form of yoga. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Krishna embraces the notion of yoga as a mental attitude of discipline and surrender that one may attain even while remaining engaged with the world, performing one's worldly duties. Hence the *Gītā* understands yoga to be primarily a spiritual stance that enables one to achieve freedom from attachments to worldly fruits even if one continues to be engaged in worldly activities. In the text, Krishna, who is deemed to be the Lord of Yoga (*yogeśvara*, 18.75), proclaims to Arjuna the powerfully liberatory potential of devotional surrender through love of God and describes *bhakti-yoga* as a path to the highest spiritual attainments. The text advocates the practice of *bhakti-yoga* even for those, including women, who might not ordinarily have access to practices reserved for Brahmin males (e.g., 9.32). Indeed,

in contemporary India, many Hindus, both male and female, perceive women to have special attraction to, and special talent for, *bhakti-yoga* by virtue of their gender.

In this essay, I wish to explore the nature of one particular women's tradition of Krishna devotion as a form of yoga. During the Hindu month of Kartik, which falls during autumn,¹ women in the North Indian city of Benares perform a special, daily *pūjā* ('ritual worship') to Krishna. From 1995–1998, I participated in three different cycles of this *pūjā* and have written about various aspects of it elsewhere.² Here, however, my focus will be on the yogic dimensions of this tradition. When I invoke the term 'yoga' in this context, I do not mean to refer to technical or classical philosophical treatments of yoga; in fact, women by and large have not, historically, had easy access to these classical traditions. Instead, I understand yoga in popular terms as grounded in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s expansive understanding of yoga. In popular Hinduism, the term 'yoga' is invoked broadly to refer to various forms of religious discipline (*sādhana*) that entail asceticism (*tapas*), self-denial, and selfless devotional love directed toward another and that serve to promote individual spiritual growth, understood in broad terms. In particular, I wish to focus on the portrayal of motherhood as it surfaces in Kartik *pūjā* practices and the ways that imagery of mothering and raising children taps into values often associated with yogic traditions. Such an understanding of yoga seems to resonate strongly with at least some Hindu women's understandings and experiences of motherhood.

The Practice of Kartik pūjā in Benares

The Hindu month of Kartik is widely celebrated as a deeply sacred month. In the city of Benares, Hindus with whom I spoke tended

¹ The traditional Hindu calendar consists of twelve lunar months. In Benares, as in most of North India, these months are measured from full moon to full moon. When measured against the solar calendar commonly used in the West, the first day of Kartik usually falls some time in mid-October, although this varies from year to year. Normal discrepancies between lunar and solar calendars mean that dates calculated by the solar calendar will not consistently correspond year after year to particular dates calculated by the lunar calendar.

² For more on Kartik and Kartik *pūjā*, see Pintchman 1999, 2003, and forthcoming. This essay draws from materials presented in my forthcoming book.

to count Kartik as being one of the three or four most religiously important months of the year. A variety of ritual observances bring the month to life in people's homes, in temples, and along the *ghāt*-s, the stepped platforms that run along the banks of the Ganges River at the edge of the city. The key religious injunction pertaining to Kartik, however, has to do with the maintenance of a religious practice known as the Kartik *vrat* (Sanskrit *vrata*).

The term *vrat* is often translated as 'vow' or 'votive observance.' *Vrat*-s as a category encompass a number of ritual elements, but they are most popularly associated with fasting. The Kartik *vrat*, like other *vrat*-s, entails abstention from certain foods.³ Even more central to this *vrat*, however, is Kartik *snān* (Sanskrit *snāna*), daily ritual bathing throughout the month. In Benares, Kartik votaries generally perform their ablutions in the Ganges River. Such ritual bathing is considered especially meritorious when performed before sunrise, so Kartik votaries tend to head for the river very early in the morning, while much of the city is still fast asleep. Both men and women may observe the strictures regarding this bathing, but most Kartik votaries in Benares seem to be women.

After completing their ritual bath, many women and girls gather in groups at the river's edge to perform a special form of Kartik *pūjā* as part of their observance of the Kartik *vrat*. Not all female Kartik votaries participate in Kartik *pūjā*, but as far as I have been able to observe, all Kartik *pūjā* participants are female Kartik votaries. Participants construct several icons (*mūrti*-s) of Hindu deities out of Ganges mud. Forming a circle around the icons, they perform *pūjā*, with the icons while singing songs unique to this occasion. Many deities are honored, but several of the songs focus specifically on Krishna, and informants told me that the worship is largely dedicated to Krishna with the other deities called to be present largely so they, too, can participate as devotees.

Why Krishna? More than half of the thirty-six women whom I formally interviewed indicated they consider Kartik *pūjā* to be related to Krishna's *rāsa-līlā*, the famous circle dance of Krishna mythology, in which Krishna danced in the middle of a circle of cowherdesses,

³ 'Fasting' in Hinduism encompasses a wide variety of food abstention practices, from complete abstention from all food and drink to abstention from a single type of edible product.

or *gopī*-s, making love with each of them. Some participants maintained that the *rāsa-līlā* took place during the month of Kartik, describing Kartik *pūjā* as a form of worship enacted in commemoration of the earthly *rāsa-līlā* performed long ago. Just as the *gopī*-s gathered around Krishna in a circle in the original circle dance, so Kartik *pūjā* participants gather in a circle around icons of Krishna and other deities; and just as the *gopī*-s adored Krishna with song and dance, *pūjā* participants worship him with song and devotional offerings. Informants also tended to employ the term *rāsa-līlā* to refer to Krishna's entire youthful life in Vrindavan, the earthly home where he spent his childhood and youth.⁴ Many participants understand their role in the *pūjā* as related to this more expansive sense of the term as well, comparable to that of the *gopī*-s who cared for Krishna during all his years as a boy in Vrindavan. Within Kartik *pūjā*, this role takes on a progressive character, marking Krishna's development from infancy to adulthood and culminating in the preparation and celebration of Krishna's marriage to the plant-goddess Tulsi, the auspicious Basil plant often used in Vaishnava forms of ritual worship.

In Kartik *pūjā*, Krishna is considered to be in his child form for approximately the first twenty days of the month. During this period, when the daily *pūjā* comes to an end, participants gather all the clay icons in the cloth on which the *pūjā* is performed, swing the baby Krishna, along with all the other deities, offer the young Krishna milk, and sing a special song to pacify him. Then the icons, cloth, and items offered during the *pūjā* are immersed in the Ganges River, marking the end of the *pūjā*. About two-thirds of the way through the month, however, there is a shift. A male priest is invited briefly into the worship circle to perform Krishna's *janeū* or *upanayana*, the ceremony marking his investiture with the sacred thread and, concomitantly, Krishna's transformation from child to young man. A brass image is used in place of the usual clay one for this occasion. *Pūjā* participants bathe Krishna lovingly in Ganges water and turmeric, dress him in fine clothing, and sing special songs for the occasion.

⁴ In John S. Hawley's research on *rāsa-līlā* performances in Braj, the term *rāsa-līlā* is also used to indicate both the *rāsa-līlā* episode itself and the entire 'play' (*līlā*) of Krishna's life enacted in liturgical drama. See Hawley, 1981 and 1983, chapters 6 and 7.

After the *janeū* Krishna is no longer thought to be a child but a young, marriageable man. Participating women then begin to look forward to Krishna's impending marriage to Tulsi, which takes place several days later.

The wedding takes place toward the end of the month on the eleventh day of Kartik's second fortnight, a day known as Prabodhanī Ekādaśī, when the deity Vishnu is believed to awaken from his annual slumber during the inauspicious four months of the rainy season (the *caturmāsa*). Sanskrit texts highlight Vishnu's awakening, and many Benarsis, including many of the women who participate in Kartik *pūjā*, commemorate it in homes and temples all over the city. Yet the practice of Kartik *pūjā* does not mark this event at all, stressing instead the marriage of Krishna and Tulsi. The wedding also marks the beginning of the marriage season in North India, functioning as a type of 'first fruits' offering; just as one ought to offer the first grains of one's harvest to God before partaking oneself, so too the first marriage arranged every season is for God, with humans partaking only afterwards.

During the last few days of Kartik following the marriage of Krishna and Tulsi, women's daily worship continues, but participants no longer use clay icons. Instead, participants perform the *pūjā* with a plastic or metal box that is said to contain all the religious merit they have accumulated during the month through participation in the Kartik *vrat* and *pūjā*. Many Kartik *pūjā* participants maintain that Tulsi does not depart with her new husband for her *śasurāl*—that is, the home of the groom and his extended family which becomes the bride's new home—until the final night of Kartik, the night of Kartik's full-moon, when the divine bride and groom are also said to consummate their marriage.

Kartik vrat and pūjā as Yogic Practices

Women who perform Kartik *pūjā* view their participation in this tradition as part of their broader observance of the Kartik *vrat*, even though the *vrat* does not require such participation. Mary McGee's work on women in Hindu *vrat* traditions highlights the domestic emphasis that generally characterizes such traditions.⁵ McGee observes

⁵ Mary McGee, 'Feasting and Fasting'; Mary McGee, 'Desired Fruits'; also Susan

that in Hindu contexts, most votaries are women, for whom one of the primary aims of *vrat*-s tends to be marital good fortune (*saubhāgya*) embodied especially in the form of a good husband, healthy children, and a happy home. McGee notes that 'while most women say that their performance of these rites is motivated more by a sense of duty (*dharma*) and devotion (*bhakti*) than by any desire, we cannot overlook the fact that it is the promised fruit (*vratphala*) that most often influences which rite a woman performs,' and this fruit is usually *saubhāgya*.⁶ McGee further observes that the perceived fruits of *saubhāgya* tend to be identical with the tasks and goals prescribed for the fulfillment of Hindu women's *dharma*, especially as embodied in the ideal of the *pativrātā*, the devoted, chaste wife. Hence, for many Hindu women the performance of *vrat*-s expresses religious devotion, fulfills duty, and, simultaneously, helps one attain householder goals that bring joy and happiness to oneself and one's family.

In her work on Hindu *vrat* traditions, however, Anne Mackenzie Pearson cautions against an overemphasis on domestic values with respect to women's performance of *vrat*-s, noting that in her experience, 'while women often spoke initially of *vrat*-s as being for [maintaining] *śuhāg* (Hindi for *saubhāgya*)—the auspicious married state—they also spoke directly or indirectly about the psychological, social, physical, and spiritual benefits for *themselves*. For many women, these were not just residual benefits, but primary benefits'.⁷ Instead, Pearson argues convincingly that women tend to view votive observances as exemplifying values, including ascetic self-discipline (*tapas* or *niyama*), self-denial, and self-control, that are broadly affiliated with yoga traditions. *Vrat*-s function for many women as a form of domestic asceticism, embracing values and practices generally associated with a life of spiritual renunciation and infusing them into the domestic realm. Pearson cites to some of her *vrat*-performing female informants who, she argues, 'have appropriated elements of the pervasive ideology of abstinence, self-control, and self-purification, articulated in the *Yogasūtra*, the *Gītā* and elsewhere, to lend their observance of *vrat*-s a wider

Bradly, *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985), 163.

⁶ McGee, 'Desired Fruits', p. 82.

⁷ Anne MacKenzie Pearson, *Because It Gives Me Peace of Mind*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 9.

meaning and more significance for the development of self and individual spirituality than the *pativrata* ideology alone would permit'.⁸ She argues that women have seen 'value and esteem placed by the Hindu tradition at large' on the self-disciplinary, or *niyama*, aspect of *vrata* performance, and so they also emphasize this aspect in their own performance of *vrata*-s (ibid.).

Like the Hindu women that Pearson interviewed, Kartik *pūjā* participants, too, tend to view their practice of the Kartik *vrata* and *pūjā* as, at the core, a form of spiritual self-discipline sharing in the structures, values, and merits generally allied with yoga. Getting up very early every morning for an entire month, walking to the river, arranging and executing an elaborate *pūjā* performance—participants tend to view all of these activities as *tapas*, religious austerity. The Purāṇas affirm the nature of this *vrata* as a form of ascetic self-discipline, praising the months of Kartik, Magh, and Vaishakh as sacred and likening the fruits garnered by religious bathing during these months to the fruits obtained by the performance of difficult religious austerities (*tapas*), ritual sacrifices, or other highly meritorious religious acts (e.g., *Nārada-Purāṇa* Uttarabhāga 40.6, *Padma Purāṇa* 5.86, 5.96, 6.122). In particular, however, this tradition also mediates yogic values, especially as these values are embodied in *bhakti-yoga*, in unique ways through imagery of motherhood. I would suggest that two particular tendencies align in this tradition to bring to the fore imagery of motherhood and to sacralize motherhood and imbue it with yogic imagery and values. The first has to do with this tradition's particular focus on Krishna and the way that Krishna worship broadly embraces the mothering role as a model of religious devotion. The second has to do with the ways women in general, and Hindu women in particular, might tend to function in socially and religiously distinctive ways.

Regarding the first point, Sanskrit poetics identifies several basic moods, called *bhāva*-s, that poetry or art may evoke; the spectator or listener experiences these as subjectively felt aesthetic emotions, called *rasa*-s. The *bhāva*-s and *rasa*-s are reconfigured in traditions of Krishna worship as devotional categories: *bhāva* comes to refer to the devotee's worshipful attitude, and *rasa* comes to refer to the joyful

⁸ Pearson, *Because It Gives Me Peace of Mind*, 214.

experience of the love relationship between a human being and Krishna.⁹ In Bengali Vaishnavism, five *bhāva*-s and their accompanying *rasa*-s emerge as devotionally central: the peaceful (*śānta*) *bhāva*, which emphasizes the experience of Krishna as Supreme Being; the *bhāva* of servitude (*dāśya*), where one experiences him as a master to be served; the *bhāva* of friendship (*sakhya*), where he is approached and loved as one's coequal friend; the *bhāva* of parental affection (*vātsalya*), where one assumes the role of a loving and nurturing elder caring for Krishna as a child; and the amorous (*mādhurya*, *śṛṅgāra*) *bhāva*, in which one envisions Krishna as an erotically appealing male lover.¹⁰ These last two devotional stances, the maternal and the amorous, dominate Krishna devotion, where Krishna is imagined most often as a mischievous but loveable child or an erotically appealing lover.

Like other forms of Krishna worship, Kartik *pūjā* invites worshipers to assume the role of his original devotees and envision themselves as participants in Krishna's divine play. In this case, it is specifically the *gopī*-s who serve as role models for *pūjā* participants, who express their devotion to Krishna by replicating the loving bonds that Krishna shared with the women who adored him during his sojourn on earth in ancient times. North Indian Vaishnava theologies have upheld the *gopī*-s as ideal exemplars of spiritual intimacy with Krishna especially through the amorous (*mādhurya*, *śṛṅgāra*) devotional sentiment. In this regard, I observed a lot of sexual joking during the course of the *pūjā*, and many participants not only acknowledged, but even delighted in describing accounts of Radha and the *gopī*-s' sexual intimacy with Krishna. However, participants tended *not* to emphasize erotic love as terribly relevant for *human* devotional posturing. Instead, they spoke overwhelmingly of their own devotional role as contemporary *sakhī*-s in terms of loving service (*sevā*), and they tended to stress the *emotional*, not sexual, nature of the *gopī*-s' attachment to Krishna as exemplifying devotional ideals. *Pūjā* participants also tended to resist any suggestion of parallel or analogy between their devotional relationship with Krishna and their marital relationships with their own hus-

⁹ Paul M. Toomey, 'Krishna's Consuming Passions', p. 161.

¹⁰ Toomey, 'Krishna's Consuming Passions', p. 161; David Haberman, *Acting as Way of Salvation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 52–57.

bands.¹¹ When it came to the relationship between maternal devotion to Krishna and their own experiences of motherhood, on the other hand, many *pūjā* participants were quick to acknowledge relational parallels and describe their performance of the *pūjā* as evoking their experiences as mothers or their understanding of the kind of experiences motherhood generally entails.

In Kartik *pūjā*, to imitate the *gopī*-s also means to assume a parental (*vātsalya*) posture. Krishna's foster mother Yashodha is often portrayed as the ideal exemplar of the parental sentiment, but the many *gopī*-s who cared for Krishna as a child, fed him, played with him, and adored him as if he were their own child also exemplify this devotional stance. Devotion to Krishna in his child form thrives throughout North India; not only is it common in popular religious practice, but it is especially prominent in the Pushtimarg tradition, a sectarian form of Krishna devotion based on the teachings of the theologian Vallabhacarya. The emphasis placed on devotion to the child Krishna in Kartik *pūjā*, while not extraordinary in the context of Hindu devotional religion, clearly reflects the social and emotional significance that Hindu women living in North India tend to attribute to motherhood and the raising of children, especially sons.

In his well-known book on Krishna, *The Divine Player: A Study of Kṛṣṇa Līlā*, David Kinsley emphasizes the nature of Krishna as a playful deity who remains eternally unbound by the social and moral norms that characterize the human realm. The child Krishna's world of play is otherworldly, *alaukika*, and reflects the nature of the divine world as fully pleasurable, a realm where 'fullness and bounty make work superfluous'.¹² The illicit eroticism in which Krishna later engages with Radha and the *gopī*-s is similarly an expression of divine sport, 'far removed from the harsh world of work and worrisome duty'.¹³ Krishna embodies the otherworldly joy of the transcendent realm, and such joy is not, nor can it ever be, subject to the social and moral constraints that restrict the human realm.

¹¹ Most of the women with whom I spoke had arranged marriages. Hence the illicit and tumultuous passion that characterizes the *gopī*-s' adoration of Krishna would, generally speaking, not make for a natural parallel.

¹² Kinsley, *The Divine Player: A Study of Kṛṣṇa Līlā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), 67.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 86.

In Kartik *pūjā*, however, it is not the idealized, *alaukika* experience of parenthood that comes to the fore but instead vision of parenthood grounded in the concrete experiences of human mothers in relation to their own children. In Sanskritic devotional traditions, the child Krishna may frolic eternally in Vrindavan; but in Kartik *pūjā*, he grows up—just like the sons and daughters of women who participate in Kartik *pūjā*—and like human children, he needs to be nurtured, directed, and cared for. When he is ready, his marriage needs to be arranged. In this regard, several participants drew a clear correlation between caring for their own, all too human children and caring for God, and in so doing tended to emphasize values popularly associated with yoga, such as self-discipline and selfless devotional love directed toward another. One *pūjā* participant, for example, compared motherhood to doing *pūjā*, explaining, ‘We give birth to a child, we put oil on the child’s body, we massage the child. Men can’t do all this. So *pūjā* is like this. Men cannot do as much as we do. They cannot do it according to the rules.’ Another participant portrayed motherhood and concern for children’s welfare as the source of women’s capacity for devotion, noting, ‘Mothers are considered supreme because they give birth to children, nurture them, bring them up, and teach them how to walk. . . . That is why mothers are always supreme, because they take so much trouble to bring up children, and they give birth. That is why God is always behind them, to protect them. (And) that is why (they are more religious), because women have to bear most of the pain. If a child gets sick, they are the ones who bear the brunt of it.’

Which brings me to my second point: women in general, and Hindu women in particular, might tend to function in religiously distinctive ways that help highlight the experience of human motherhood as religiously significant in this context, imbuing it with yogic meaning. Pearson notes that women’s alignment with ascetic practices in *vrat* performance may be seen as an extension of ‘the training in self-denial, self-restraint and self-sacrifice that many women receive as they are growing up,’ noting that women are ‘culturally expected to practice self-denial in order to serve the interests of male kin’ (215). Such self-restraint and self-sacrifice certainly characterize the maternal role.

Some scholars have stressed the nature of Indian culture as a ‘group-oriented’ culture in comparison with Western cultures, arguing that while Western cultures strive to cultivate in individuals a

sense of independence and autonomy, Indian culture tends to cultivate interdependence and 'we-ness,' a sense of self entailing ego boundaries that are 'more permeable to constant affective exchanges and emotional connectedness with others' and a 'heightened empathic awareness of others'.¹⁴ These scholars have tended to connect an emphasis on interdependence to joint-family living and childcare practices in India, which engage multiple caretakers, pushing children to rely more on a group of kin than on their individual parents. What seems to be missing from these discussions of child rearing and issues of independence/interdependence, however, is thoughtful engagement with the ways that girls and boys tend to be socialized differentially toward autonomy and interdependence both in Western contexts and in India. Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking work on women and morality, for example, demonstrates that for American women, identity tends to be defined less in terms of an autonomous, independent self and more in terms of relationship and responsibility toward others.¹⁵ Conversely, I have often wondered about the relationship between the alleged empathetic Indian sense of 'we-ness' and stress on renunciation of personal desire as I have watched Benarsi men sit by while their wives and daughters scurry around to fulfill their needs and wants, bring tea to guests and family members, care for children, and massage the bodies of elderly relatives. While Indian Hindu men may value interpersonal bonds, they do not express this value in the same ways as women. For Hindu women, caring for children, like caring for God, seems to be much more central to a sense of identity, purpose, and meaning than it seems to be for Hindu men.

Susan Sered observes that women's religions generally tend to be characterized by a 'this-worldly' orientation and tend to sacralize the experience of motherhood, reflecting and affirming women's this-worldly maternal experiences and values.¹⁶ Kartik *pūjā* traditions similarly affirm motherhood as both socially and religiously meaningful.

¹⁴ Alan Roland, *In Search of Self in India and Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 233; Steve Derné, *Culture in Action* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 161.

¹⁵ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 160.

¹⁶ Susan Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

But they do so in a particularly Hindu idiom, valorizing maternal devotion as continuous with the values and practices so highly prized in Hindu traditions of yoga.

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WISDOM AND METHOD: YOGA IN THE PLATONIC DIALOGUES

Judy D. Saltzman

Abstract

Yoga, defined as a method of liberating the individual from the bondage of material existence and joining her/him to a higher, enlightened philosophy and religious systems, was taught in the West through Pythagoras, called the Pitar or Yavana Guru in India. In his line of successors, Plato continued this tradition of spiritual knowledge and austerity of habits, but broadened it hopefully to influence the political and ethical climate of the Greek city states and of humanity in general. This essay shows how the yogas: *jñāna*, the seeking of knowledge as higher wisdom; *karma*, the purifying of behavior and political institutions; *bhakti*, devotion through love, and *rāja*, the kingly mystery of meditation, are all present in the Platonic dialogues. Although Plato presents his knowledge in specifically Greek language and terms, and some of his methods differ, his spiritual aims are not ultimately different from those of the *Upaniṣads* or *Bhagavadgītā*.

Yoga is a method or discipline for liberating the human being from the bondage of material existence toward attaining a higher and serene state of consciousness. At basis, yoga contains the idea of yoking, uniting or joining the ordinary mind to a higher, enlightened state. In Sāṃkhya philosophy it would be the freedom of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*. In Advaita Vedānta, it would have the goal of realizing that *ātman* is *brahman*. In the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Upaniṣads*, yoga is a form of practical philosophy. Knowledge, devotion, good works and meditation are all practiced as ends in themselves and for the greater good, not for personal gain to the practitioner. *Jñāna*, or the discipline of knowledge, is never undertaken simply to gather information or to increase success, but has inner spiritual transformation as its goal and basis.

With this broad definition in mind, I contend in this essay that yoga is not confined to Indian or even to Asian thought, but its liberal nature can be found in Greek as well as other philosophers, but most specifically in the Platonic Dialogues. In these works, the idea of *dialektikē* is Plato's method of discovery. Dialectic is an art and a

strict discipline. Most conversations are not dialogues, and most dialogues do not include the participants who are capable of moving to unexplored avenues of thought that would transform them as thinkers. However, a reading of Plato's most celebrated dialogues, such as *Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Theaetetus*, illustrates this deeper dialectical capacity. The Dialectic is in essence jñāna yoga, but other yoga forms are woven into the Platonic quest for knowledge: service to the community, (karma), devotion to the Good (*agathon*) and meditation on death (*thanatos*) which constitutes a kind of rāja yoga. In Plato's work, as in the *Bhagavadgītā* and other writings on yoga, no one kind of yoga is complete in isolation from another. In the *Republic*, even athletic yoga is discussed in the form of gymnastics.

It is clear that different Dialogues emphasize different kinds of yoga or disciplines. In the *Symposium*, Eros is the energy of bhakti yoga, in which soul-mates, through devotion to Beauty itself (*kalon*) and the Good (*agathon*), are also devoted to each other. In this way, the souls will attain wisdom, *sophia*. For Plato, philosophy is a form of purification or *tapas* of the soul. In the *Phaedrus*, the soul ascends to contemplate the truth in each Form (*eidos*), but returns again to bring up other lovers:

It is there that True Being dwells without color or shape that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot can behold it, and true knowledge is knowing thereof. Now even as the mind of a god is nourished by reason and knowledge, so also is it with every soul that has care to receive her proper food; wherefore when at last she has beheld being, she is well content, and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers, until the heaven's revolution brings her back full circle. And while she is bourne round she discerns justice, its very self, and likewise temperance, and knowledge, not the knowledge which is neighbor to becoming and varies with the various objects to which we commonly ascribe being, but the veritable knowledge of being that veritably is. And when she has contemplated likewise and feasted upon all else that has true being, she descends again within the heavens and comes back home. And having come, the charioteer sets his steeds at their manger, and puts ambrosia before them and draught of nectar to drink withal.¹

For Plato, knowledge does not mean much without devotion, and devotion means little unless one returns to share insight and under-

¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, *Plato: Collected Dialogues*, tr. R. Hackforth, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollinger Series LXXI, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 494.

standing. In the *Republic*, the Philosopher King returns to the Cave to serve the community, just as the Hindu *r̥ṣi*s never really leave humanity after enlightenment. Śaṅkara wrote in *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*:

The great and peaceful ones live regenerating the world like the coming of spring; having crossed the ocean of embodied existence themselves, they freely aid all others who seek to cross it. The very essence and inherent will of Mahatmas is to remove the suffering of others, just as the ambrosia-rayed moon of itself cools the earth heated by the intense rays of the sun.²

Not only the *Republic*, but the *Laws* and *Statesman*, teach karma yoga in which the Laws (*nomoi*) are in tune with universal Divine Law, and the Statesman is like the Philosopher King, trained to serve the people:

On this principle, it is the men, who possess the art of ruling, and these only, whom we are to regard as rulers, whatever constitutional form their rule may take. Their subjects may be willing or unwilling; they may rule with or without a code of laws. It is the same with doctors . . . The one essential condition is that they act for the good of our bodies to make them better instead of worse, and treat men's ailments in every case as healers acting to preserve life. We must insist that in this disinterested scientific ability we see distinguishing mark of true authority in medicine—and of true authority everywhere else as well.³

Some assertions of Plato have got him labeled as unduly authoritarian. However, there are many indications that the dialogues are symbolic instructions for the soul to consciously establish the rule of reason. Plato's primary concerns are not literal political instructions. One can discern here an order to get tough with oneself even beyond the *sattva* quality of doing what is good in a prescribed, customary

² Shankaracharya, *Hermes*, Vol. 1 # 2. Ed. Raghavan Iyer (Santa Barbara: Concord Grove Press, 1975). Another translation by Charles Johnston offers a slightly different meaning, but still implies that the teaching of the *r̥ṣi*s is to be offered to those not yet enlightened: 'To those who are wandering the desert of the world, athirst, on the path of circling birth and death, weary, oppressed and worn by sorrow as by the sun's fierce rays, may this teaching reveal the secondless ETERNAL, bringing joy, like an ocean of nectar near of hand: for this teaching of Shankara brings victory and leads to Nirvana.' Shankaracharya, *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*, tr. by Charles Johnston (London: John M. Watkins, 1964), 84.

³ Plato, *Statesman*, tr. by J. B. Skemp, Hamilton and Cairns, 1062.

sense. What is ultimately the path to the *agathon* or the Good is art beyond the conventions of society as people know them, just as justice is much more than helping friends and harming enemies, as Polemarchus falsely argues in Book I of the *Republic*. The art of the Good involves the complete renunciation of rewards for the personal self.

The *Republic* contains all the instructions for renunciation for anyone who is capable of making the journey out of the Cave. Those who are worthy of knowledge are devoted to the Guiding Wisdom (*phronesis*) which leads them out of the Cave to the real Sunlight. When they have learned, they must return again to suffering, ignorant humans, chained in the Cave and do their duty under karma. Socrates says:

You must go down, then, each in his turn, to live with the rest and let your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness.⁴

In this way, karma and rāja yoga are introduced in the sixth and seventh of books of the *Republic*. The *Phaedo*, as well, is a clear meditation on death and transformation. The philosopher must be one-pointed and totally focused on the idea that all philosophy is a meditation on death. Socrates says that true philosophers make dying their profession, and that to them of all men death is least alarming.⁵ But this meditation is certainly not morbid. It is instruction to abjure the pleasures of the senses, reminiscent of Kṛṣṇa's teaching to Arjuna in the second chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* on Sāṃkhya-Yoga. In the *Gītā*, one must have the knowledge to distinguish and separate *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates says:

Is not what we call death a freeing and separation of the soul from the body? . . . If a man has trained himself to live in a state as close as possible to death, would it not be ridiculous for him to be distressed when death comes to him?⁶

For Plato, philosophy was a whole process of purification or *tapas*. The purified soul moves to great heights of knowledge and transcendence of the physical:

⁴ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated with an introduction by Francis Macdonald Cornford, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 234.

⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, tr. by Hugh Tredennick, Hamilton and Cairns, 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

... And of these such who have purified themselves by philosophy live thereafter altogether without bodies, and reach habitations even more beautiful, which is not easy to portray—nor is there time to do so now. But the reasons which we already described provide ground enough, as you can see, Simmias, for leaving nothing undone to attain during life some measure of goodness and wisdom, for the prize is glorious and the hope is great.⁷

There are remarkable parallels in the teachings of Plato and Indian philosophy and traditions, as noted by E. J. Urwick in *The Platonic Quest*. Whether there is a direct line of influence or not is the subject of another essay, but Urwick does raise the issue that there is a tradition that Pythagoras was known in India:

It is noteworthy that Pythagoras is the only great thinker of Greece whom Plato never criticizes. But of whom he speaks with the greatest deference and respect, referring to him or his followers for elucidation of difficulties, instancing him as the great example of a teacher whose teaching had in it living truth enough to inspire a band of devoted disciples, and to transform their lives as well as their beliefs. And everyone of the doctrines, which we know formed the 'gospel' of Pythagoras and of the Pythagorean Brotherhood at Crotona, was an almost exact reproduction of the cardinal doctrines of the Indian Vidya and the Indian Yoga—so much so that Indian Vedantins today do not hesitate to claim Pythagoras as one of themselves, one of their great expounders, whose very name was the only Greek form of the Indian title Pitar Guru, or Father-teacher.⁸

Urwick is right in that some Vedāntins and Indian thinkers would agree with him. In the essay, C. L. Tripathi in 'The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Neo-Platonic Thought' wrote:

In Plato's philosophy, as we have discussed earlier, there is not even a single concept which is in tune with the Greek theology. The essential unity of the human and divine spirit, the immortality of the soul, the escape from the restless world of troublesome journey, the phenomenality of the world, the contempt for the body, the distinction between knowledge and opinion, contradict every single idea of Greek popular religion.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 94.

⁸ E. J. Urwick, *The Platonic Quest: An Interpretation of the Republic*, edited with an Epilogue by Raghavan Iyer (Santa Barbara: Concord Grove Press, 1983), 18.

⁹ C. L. Tripathi, 'The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Neo-Platonic Thought,' *NeoPlatonism and Indian Thought* (Norfolk, Virginia: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1982), 283. Tripathi also quotes Pindar who reacted to the Orphic doctrine

Tripathi also draws the obvious parallels between *Upaniṣadic* teaching and Orphism which is mentioned in the *Phaedo*, as well as the Eleusian mysteries:

Like Orphic religion, Eleusinianism also believes in the immortality and divinity of the soul. It says that dark shrouds are wrapped round the soul; man can unwrap them through initiation and become divine. At the end of the initiation, the initiate hears the last words from the teacher, 'Go in Peace,' which reminds us of the Upaniṣadic 'Om Santih, Santih, Santih.'¹⁰

Urwick, as well, also points out the remarkable similarity between Plato's teaching of three classes and the Hindu caste system. In the *Republic*, the Guardians correspond to the *brahmin*-s in the *Veda*, the Auxiliaries to the *kṣatriya*-s, the Merchant-Farmers to the *vaiśya*-s and *śūdra*-s. Although there are only three classes instead of four in Plato, the striking parallel is that each fits a part or quality of the soul: the Guardians are ruled by reason or *sattva* (*logistikon*), the Auxiliaries by *rajas* (*thumos*) or emotional energy, and the Merchants-Farmers by *tamas* (*epithumia*) or passive longing. Working together with the rule of *logistikon*, these make the individual as well as the society work. However, a distinctive difference with the reality of the Hindu caste system, was that there was no way in reality for a brilliant boy or girl to move upward in caste or profession, whereas in Plato a 'golden' child of Guardian quality, even if born to servants, may become a Guardian, or, conversely, a 'bronze' child born to Guardians should move to be a farmer in Plato's view.

The direct application of this Platonic teaching to yoga is that the beings that are capable of the dialectical discipline can move upward toward noetic consciousness and a pure vision of the *agathon*, and even acting as one with the *agathon*. Socrates says, 'to Know the

in the following way: 'Seek not to become a god; seek not to become Zeus . . . mortal things befit mortals best. Mortal winds must seek what is fitting at the hands of the gods, recognizing what is at our feet, and to what lot we are born. Strive not my soul, for an immortal life, but do the thing which it is within thy power to do.' W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and the Greek Religion* (1935), pp. 236–27. Eduard Zeller also notes in *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer Geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Erstern Teil, Erste Abteilung, Vorsokratische Philosophie (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), that Greek philosophy is hard headed, practical, and empirical, and nothing to be grateful to foreigners about.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

Good is to do the good.' He or she who would be really just and practice righteousness (*dikaïosunê*) must move up the ladder of the Divine Dialectic. In Book VII of the Republic, the poor souls in the Cave begin with their consciousness in a state of ignorant imagining (*eikasia*). They are chained in a state of passive inertia (*tamas*). Their state of knowing is that only images (*eikasia*) exist. They have no real knowledge at all. In fact they suffer from *avidyā* or total ignorance. If they had the desire to turn around, they might have some *pistis*, true perception or opinion that they have been seeing only shadows of objects (*zôa*) on a wall. The desire to see things as clearly as possible in their constant world of flux will at least give them *avāya* or perception. However, the real climb out of the Cave comes only when the Divided Line between the world of *māyā* and the world of *nitya sat* or Being is reached. It is only then that *dianoia* or Real Thinking is reached. For the first time the soul is in a kind of dispassionate state or *vairāgya*. The philosopher is seeing the world as it really is outside the Cave, to continue Plato's analogy. He or she sees *mathēmata* or real objects. Finally, the soul can get into a state of *noêsis* or pure vision of the Forms, all these being illumined by the *agathon*, the Good. The philosopher has at last focused his/her mind to see the truth (*satya*) as it really is. The Myth of Er would also indicate that this higher knowledge would involve *turiya sattva* (Soul Remembering). For Plato, the Knower becomes the Known in the noetic state. Although the philosopher may experience a temporary state of *sat-cit-ānanda*, like Śaṅkara's *īśi*, he must return to the world of *māyā* to help suffering souls.

Is this yoga? Urwick argues that it is jñāna yoga in its profoundest sense, the sacrifice of knowledge:

A true religion is the Dharma of the soul—that which binds it to God—so it may be called Yoga—literally, yoking or uniting. But the latter is generally used to express, not the condition of union (that is called liberation or realization or bliss), but the process by which the soul unites itself with God—or, as we may paraphrase it, the path of religion. It must not be thought, however, that there is only one process or path; there are several differing in detail, but alike leading to the goal of realization. And of these paths, three stand out, distinct, clearly defined, and fully elaborated: they are—Karma Yoga, or the way to union by right action and dispassionate performance of all duty; Bhakti Yoga, or the way of devotion to a personal God; and Gnana Yoga, or the way of full discernment and wisdom. Of these none can be called higher or more sure than the rest. But the last-named is perhaps,

in our view at any rate, the hardest; and it is this one which, in the main, Plato is expounding.¹¹

Urwick explains that yoga is a process or discipline of yoking or uniting. It is a process or liberation, not the condition of union with God or the Higher Nature (*puruṣa*) which is expressed by the word 'yoga'. Although Plato's philosopher never unites with the *agathon* or the Good, he must act in tune with it, exemplify it, be it. The Guru or the Guide (*phronesis*) which he or she becomes is literally 'the dispeller of darkness' in the Cave. Furthermore, Urwick does not speak of rāja yoga which in the *Bhagavadgītā* is the 'kingly mystery,' completing all the yogas. However, one could say that the focus of the mind Plato enjoins, the contemplation of the Forms, is much like rāja yoga.

The Cave Analogy is that of a brain filled with darkness. However, Plato gives a teaching in Book VII or the *Republic* that he thinks will dispel the gloom:

If it is true, then, we must see that education is not what it is said to be by some, who profess to put knowledge into a soul which does not possess it, as if they could put sight into blind eyes. On the contrary, our own account signifies that the soul of every man does possess the power of learning and truth and the organ to see it with; and that, just as one might have to turn the whole body round in order that the eye should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good. Hence there may well be an art whose aim would be to effect this very thing, the conversion of the soul, in the readiest way; not to put the power of sight into the soul's eye, which already has it, but to ensure that, instead of looking in the wrong direction, it is turned the way it ought to be.¹²

It may well be that Plato is speaking of the pineal gland. This could be 'the organ to see it with.' However, this gland is largely atrophied in the normal person. Some have called it 'The Eye of Wisdom' or 'Eye of Śiva.' By writing in this way, it is clear that Plato is going beyond the ratiocinative intellect alone. The power to look directly upon ideas is beyond even *dianoia*. It is rāja yoga or *ekagratā*, the

¹¹ Urwick, 159–160.

¹² Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated with an introduction and notes by Francis MacDonald Cornford, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 370.

awakening of the concentration to focus entirely on the *nous* or mind beyond this world. Plato seems to be telling his disciples that the way out of the Cave is within the self.

However, the pineal gland is not well understood, even by contemporary researchers. This gland, which Descartes regarded as the seat of the human soul, is controversial. About the size of a pea and cone shaped, it is connected to the cerebellum in the back center of the brain in humans and higher mammals. Jean Cousin, a French medical doctor who knew Descartes, said it was the meeting point at the center and middle of the ventricles, threads and data coming from external senses. However, he thought its primary function was to bring all the senses together, and to enable a person to see. He wrote: 'Because it is unique, supported by the choroid plexus and permanently inflated appearances which have been elaborated, it is only in this gland that the double appearances received by both eyes and the ears can and must be united, for there is one sense faculty and one paramount organ.'¹³

Long thought to be atrophied, at least in part, recent research on the pineal gland or epiphysis shows that it is connected to the preservation of LSD and serotonin in the brain. When it is activated by light, it inhibits melatonin which causes sleep. Serotonin is a transmitter of electrical impulses across the synapses of the nerve cells, LSD, already in the brain, can have a heightened effect by being taken as a drug. It can open up hitherto unused areas of the brain and cause the well known phenomena of the 'trip.'¹⁴ However, if its unused function is slowly activated through meditation and study, it is a central cause of the 'light in the head.'

Although studied by contemporary research, this function was known thousands of years ago, and not just by Hindu yogis. A Muslim doctor, Ibn al-Jazzi, 900–980 C.E., said that the pineal gland played a role in recollection.¹⁵ Of course, for Plato, it was a very special organ. Its higher activation through the study of mathematics,

¹³ Jean Cousin, quoted in Gert-Jan C. Lokhorst and Timo T. Kaitaro, 'The Originality of Descartes' Theory about the Pineal Gland,' 3. <http://www.eur.nl/fw/staff/lokhorst/pineal.html>.

¹⁴ Russ McClay, 'The Pineal Gland, LSD and Serotonin,' <http://www.serendipity.li/mcclay/pineal.html>.

¹⁵ Ibn al-Jazzi, quoted in 'The Originality of Descartes' Theory about the Pineal Gland,' 11.

listening to music based on Pythagorean octaves, abstaining from alcohol, sex and meat, were instrumental in spiritual development. Like the Pythagoreans, the Platonists thought the energy of the soul was activated by the study of mathematics and higher matters. Through this discipline, the student could get back to the child state he/she had lost. Otherwise, as Wordsworth says, 'shades of the prison house will close upon the growing boy'¹⁶ permanently. However, this takes a supreme effort of study and discipline. No Pythagorean would ever allow himself/herself to fall asleep without obeying these injunctions:

Nor suffer sleep to close thine eyes
Till thrice thy acts that day thou has run o'er;
How slip? What deed? What duty left undone?

And on rising:

As soon as ere thou wakest, order then
The actions to be done that following day.¹⁷

Being active in the control of one's faculties and life was central to the Pythagoreans and Platonists. For this reason, the *mathêmatekoî* (the students intensely engaged in study) were much more learned than the *akoustikoi* (listeners).

Although engaged in a kind of devotion or bhakti yoga, the *akoustikoi* would not reach to the heights of those who were willing to activate their higher nature which would take the efforts of meditation and intense study. The Pythagoreans and Platonists seemed to know, as did the Egyptian initiates with whom Pythagoras studied, that the 'Eye of Ra' could be opened, if the person were purified and the pineal gland fully operational.¹⁸ The *kuṇḍalinī* at the base of the spine could then be activated. The initiate would move to a totally other and new state of being. Is this what is meant by noetic consciousness or full consciousness of *nous* and the vision of the Forms in the Divine Dialectic? It is hard to know for sure, since Plato does

¹⁶ William Wordsworth, 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,' *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1192), 607.

¹⁷ Pythagoras, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, compiled and translated by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Phanes Press, 1987), 131.

¹⁸ Anonymous, 4, <http://www.crystalinks.com/kundalini.html>.

not commit his deepest thoughts to writing, as he admits in the Epistle VII. Plato says the study of Dialectic leads one to unknown heights:

Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation and by use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its power to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light.¹⁹

For these reasons, Plato presents his deepest teachings about what the real study of philosophy and concentration can do for someone. He presents his deepest teachings in the mathematical ciphers in the *Republic* and other works and through the mouth of Socrates, the good man who claimed to know nothing.

However, it is not only in the *Republic* that Plato presents teachings which are clearly dialectical yoga. In the *Symposium* one finds 'the wise Diotima,' the teacher of Socrates, telling him that the virtues of Eros are in fact the energy of devotion to the Divine source. The vision of the Beautiful or what humans should really cherish will never take the form of the flesh. Diotima said:

But if it were given to man to gaze on beauty's very self—unsullied, unalloyed, and freed from the mortal taint that haunts the frailer loveliness of flesh and blood— If, I say, it were given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face, would you call this, she asked me, an unenviable life, whose eyes had been opened to the vision, and who had gazed upon the true contemplation until it had become his own forever?

And remember, she said, that it is only when he discerns beauty itself though what makes it visible that a man will be quickened with the true, and not the seeming, virtue—for it is virtue's self that quickens him, not virtue's semblance. And when he has brought forth and reared this perfect virtue, he shall be called the friend of God, and if ever it is given to man to put on immortality, it shall be given to him.²⁰

This is very much the same teaching in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* when Yājñavalkya tells his wife and disciple Maitreyī:

¹⁹ Plato, *Epistle VII*, tr. L. A. Post, Hamilton and Cairns, 1591.

²⁰ Plato, *Symposium*, tr. Michael Joyce, Hamilton and Cairns, 563.

It is not for the sake of the husband, my beloved, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self, the husband is dear;

It is not for the sake of the wife, my beloved, that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Self the wife is dear.²¹

Of course the Self in the *Upaniṣads* is the *ātman*. In Plato the psyche or soul is bound to love Beauty itself through the energy of Eros. Only in this way, for Plato, will the real and divine nature of love be understood. It involves the renunciation of all personal lust. In Diotima's teaching, as in Yajñavalkya's, devotion to another is really devotion to the Divine.

It can be further noted that the idea of dialogue or dialectic, is central in the *Bhagavadgītā* as well as in the *Upaniṣads*. The dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna leads Arjuna to a vision of the Cosmic Kṛṣṇa as *brahman*. The *Upaniṣads* are presented in question and answer form in which the disciple is literally, 'Sitting at the feet of a master in order to obtain secret spiritual knowledge.'²² There are other Platonic Dialogues in which the notion of Dialectic for obtaining a higher state of consciousness is central. One of these Dialogues is *Charmides* in which Plato extols the merits of *sôphrosunê*. This word is very hard to translate, but it means something like 'self restraint' or 'prudence.' It is much like the yoga of equal mindedness and treating all equably. It is the very opposite of *hubris* or self-pride.

In the *Charmides*, Socrates talks with the elderly man Critias. Socrates asks the old man, why, among all the youths going in and out of the temple, he is so impressed with the young *Charmides*. What does he have that makes him so special? Is he more intelligent, better looking or a better athlete than the other boys? No, but he has the quality of *sôphrosunê*. It seems to come from within him. However, even then, Socrates does not know exactly how to define it. For this reason the rest of the dialogue is a discussion of what *sôphrosunê* might be and why this lad is an exemplar of it. Critias offers definitions which are shot down by Socrates. Some of these are (1) Doing all things orderly and quietly. This is dismissed because, occasionally, one must be quick and bold. (2) Modesty, but never false modesty,

²¹ *Bṛhadârmyaka Upaniṣad. The Upaniṣads: Breath of the Eternal*, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester (New York: New American Library, 1975), 87.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

because one must know his/her abilities. (3) Goodness and nobility. The man or woman of *sôphrosunê* does only good. However, it is difficult to know what is good and noble in all situations. (4) Minding one's own business. However, craftsmen, physicians and statesmen must mind the business of others. (5) Self knowledge is also *sôphrosunê*, but achieving it is harder than defining it. (6) *Sôphrosunê* involves happiness, but the man or woman of *Sophrosyne* must be happy with their lot in life, not strive for pleasure or ecstasy. In general, it seems to be rather like the Confucian virtue of *li* (Propriety), combined with the Socratic maxim of *gnôthi sutton* ('Know Thyself').

Sôphrosunê seems to be an incalculable virtue of the soul which is rare but real. The person of *sôphrosunê* is rather like the godlike man in the sixteenth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* to whom self-restraint brings contentment. Plato describes this wise person in this way:

If, indeed, as we were supposing at first, the wise man were able to distinguish what he knew and did not know, and that he knew the one and did not know the other, and to recognize a similar faculty of discernment in others, there would certainly be a great advantage in being wise, for we should never make a mistake, but should pass through life unerring guides of ourselves and of those who are under us. We should not attempt to do what we did not know, but we should find out those who know, and hand the business over to them and trust in them. Nor should we allow those who are under us to do anything which they are not likely to do well, and they would be likely to do well just that of which they had knowledge. And house or state which was ordered or administered under the guidance of wisdom and everything else of which wisdom was the lord, would be sure to be well ordered, for with the truth guiding and error eliminated, in all their doings men must do nobly and well, and doing well means happiness.²³

For Plato, as in the teachings of the great yogis, happiness does not mean pleasure or the seeking of it. Happiness is reaching a balanced contentment through concentration on the Divine. In the *Manusmṛti*, one finds the same ideals of self-restraint and contentment to be necessary virtues:

In order to become happy, a man must maintain perfect contentment and become self-controlled. For contentment is the very root of happiness, and the opposite of contentment is the root of all unhappiness.²⁴

²³ Plato, *Charmides*, tr. Benjamin Jowett, Hamilton and Cairns, 118.

²⁴ *The Laws of Manu*, tr. Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), 75.

When Manu speaks of *dharma*, it sounds very much like *sôphrosunê*:

The ten points of duty are patience, forgiveness, self-control, not stealing, purification, master of the sensory powers, wisdom, learning, truth, and lack of anger. Those priests who study the ten points of duty carefully and, after they have learnt it, follow it, progress to the highest level of existence.²⁵

The idea of temperance or *Sôphrosunê* is also seen in the long Dialogue *Laws*, written later in life:

Now it is God who is, for you and me, of a truth the 'measure of all things,' much more truly than as they say 'man.' So he who would be loved by such a being must himself become Such to the utmost of his might, and so, by this argument, he that is temperate among us is loved by God, for he is like God, whereas he that is not temperate is unlike God and at variance with him; so also it is with the unjust, and the same rule holds in all else. Now from this rule, I would have you note, follows another—of all rules to my mind, the grandest and truest, which is this. For the good man 'tis most glorious and good and profitable to happiness of life, aye, and most excellently fit, to do sacrifice and be ever in communion with heaven through prayer and offerings and all manner of worship, but for the evil, entirely the contrary.²⁶

Here Plato is making a distinction, reminiscent of the *Gītā* chapter 16 between Godlike and demonical natures. The karma of the just or godlike person to be happy and content obviously comes from temperance and devotion, whereas the person who is intemperate and unmoved by the love of the Divine, suffers the opposite result. Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, is very explicit on this point:

Self conceited, stubborn, filled with pride and arrogance of wealth, they worship by performing sacrifice in name only, hypocritically, and against all prescribed rules.

Possessed of egotism, force, pride, desire and anger, these envious ones hate me in the bodies of themselves and others.

These cruel and hateful low men, these wicked ones, I constantly throw back into the cycle of existence, into demoniac wombs.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 126.

²⁶ Plato, *Laws*, tr. by A. E. Taylor, Hamilton and Cairns, 1307.

²⁷ *The Bhagavad Gita*, translated with introduction and critical essays by Eliot Deutsch (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1968), Chapter XVI, 123.

It is clear that lack of self control in life leads to lack of choice or poor choice due to ignorance in rebirth. One finds this same teaching in the Myth of Er in Book X of the *Republic* wherein ignorant people choose lives as tyrants and are worse off than they were before.²⁸

In the *Laws* at the start of Book V, Plato affirms the divinity of the soul: 'Of all a man has—after his gods—the divinist thing and the most truly his own, is his soul.' Of course, neither the soul ('Psuchê') nor God ('Theos') are personal for Plato. The personality does not reincarnate. A personal God does not make arbitrary decisions. For Plato, the universe is run on impersonal laws. The ideal state reflects these laws, and thus it should have immutable laws as well.

However, the Dialogue *Statesman* is the dialectical opposite of the *Laws*. In the latter, the whole idea is to get humanity in line with the divine and make human laws which cannot be broken without a terrible nemesis. The Statesman takes an opposing perspective. Instead of being concerned about structure and laws, the best government is actually lawless. The Stranger, who may very well have been Indian, speaks to the young Socrates:

And yet we must never lose sight of the truth we stated before. The man with the real knowledge, the true statesman, will in many instances allow his activities to be dictated by his art and pay no regard to written prescriptions. He will do this whenever he is convinced that there are measures which are better than the instructions he previously wrote and sent to people at a time when he could not be there to control them personally.²⁹

The Stranger is speaking of a kind of *rāmarāja*. The ideal ruler simply knows how to rule. Rigid laws do not always fit the demands of a situation. It is said that Abraham Lincoln, considered one of the two greatest American Presidents, would have been impeached today because of how he circumvented certain aspects of the Constitution in order to save the union.³⁰ In this dialogue, Plato

²⁸ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, Cornford, 356.

²⁹ Plato, *Statesman*, tr. J. B. Skemp, Hamilton and Cairns, 1070.

³⁰ <http://www.worldbookonline.com/wbAuth/jsp/wbArticle.jsp>. According to the World Book Encyclopedia Online, Lincoln met the crisis after the attack on Fort Sumter with energetic action. 'He called a militia to suppress the 'insurrection.' He proclaimed an embargo of Southern Ports, and expanded the army beyond the limits required by law. Southern sympathizers in the North were obstructing the war

holds the position that the most divine soul is the best ruler and that statesmanship is an art. Human laws may never reach to the level of the divine. People would also be skeptical of the power the ruler would have:

They despair of finding any one man willing and able to rule with oral and intellectual insight and to render every man his due with strictest fairness. They feel sure that a man with such absolute power will be bound to employ it to the hurt and injury of his personal enemies and to put them out of the way. but it remains true that if the ideal ruler we have described were to appear on earth he would be acclaimed and he would spend his days guiding in strictest justice and perfect felicity that one and only true commonwealth worthy of the name.³¹

The democratically inclined person would be horrified at the power of the statesman. However, the ideal for building the soul is that the statesman is a man of *sattva*. He has knowledge and devotion to the ideal of the Good and to the welfare of the people. He is not out for himself. He is like the person of *sattva* in the seventeenth chapter of the *Gītā*. In this chapter, the man of *sattva* is described as paying homage to the gods, speaking pleasant, truthful and beneficent words, and attaining tranquility of mind and self control.³²

Plato is well aware that his ideal laws or perfect statesman will not be a reality with humans in their present state. For all his practical instructions, Plato wants men and women to seek knowledge first. For all of his practical advice, Plato insists that one must have the wisdom to do the method. One can find explicit ideas of a jñāna yoga nature in the dialogue *Philebus*. This dialogue is very much like an *Upaniṣad*. The young men Protarchus and Philebus inquire whether wisdom or pleasure is better by asking a few questions. Socrates then delivers a discourse on the subject in the manner of a guru. He answers in a way identical to the *Gītā* that some pleasures are delightful, but they do not bring permanent happiness as do the efforts of

effort. As a result, Lincoln suspended the privilege of *habeas corpus* where these Southern sympathizers were active. In addition, Lincoln ordered the spending of federal funds without waiting for congressional appropriations. About *habeas corpus* Lincoln said, 'Are all the laws *but* one to go unexamined, and the government itself go to pieces lest that one become violated?' 3.

³¹ Plato, *Statesman*. 1072.

³² *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Deutsch, chapter 17, p. 127.

the mind. Socrates says: 'I believe that, that for those who had chosen the life of reason and intelligence, there must be no experiencing of any pleasure, great or small.'³³ Of course, Socrates is speaking of sensual pleasures. Socrates points out that intellect is a pleasure of the second kind which is beyond sensation. Then there are the pleasures of the soul which involve *anamnêsis*. He says: 'When that which has been experienced by the soul in common with the body is recaptured, so far as may be, by and in the soul itself apart from the body, then we speak of recollecting something.'³⁴

Further on, Plato also writes of a state of the soul which is detached or like *vairāga*. When pleasure is understood as nothing more than escape from pain, one learns to become indifferent to both. As in the *Gītā* chapter four, Socrates tells the young men to attain that equal mindedness which will make them indifferent to all so-called painful and pleasurable sensations. This will also make them quite incapable of fearing life and death.

The jñāna yoga of Plato can also be demonstrated in the *Theaetetus*. Socrates respects the desire of the lad, Theaetetus to learn and tells him, 'Philosophy begins in wonder.'³⁵ Like Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, this Greek boy has reached a point in which he is teachable. In order to be teachable, one must quit finding fault with teachers and teachings, but not with dialectical questioning. One must keep in mind that, for Socrates, virtue is knowledge. Even an intellectually brilliant person has no real knowledge in the Platonic sense, if he/she is unethical toward others. Such a person would have no true wisdom. Just as in the sixteenth chapter of the *Gītā*,³⁶ the person of demonic nature can be very smart and successful, but without compassion and self-restraint. There is no possibility of his/her understanding life's most important lessons. Worst of all, such a person is cut off from Kṛṣṇa, the divine Lord within. In Plato's works, the person with no *aretê* (Virtue), is a person without knowledge, although

³³ Plato, *Philebus*, tr. R. Hackforth, ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 1111.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1112.

³⁵ Plato, *Theaetetus*, tr. F. M. Conford, ed. Hamilton and Cairns, 845.

³⁶ *The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 123.

'I have slain this enemy, and I shall slay others.
also. I am the lord, the enjoyer; I am perfect, strong and happy.'

'I am wealthy and well-born. Who else is there.
like me? I shall sacrifice, I shall give, I shall rejoice'
—thus speak those who are deluded by ignorance.

he/she may know something about art, music, politics, etc. If this knowledge is sought simply for self gain, such a sophist will never know the *agathon*. In fact, such a pursuit is only another form of personal pleasure and success. However, the philosopher who sees all knowledge connected to divine origin will understand everything in a whole new wonderful light. When emerging from the Cave, information becomes true knowledge and wisdom.

Spiritual knowledge is really jñāna yoga. Any subject relating to nature can have a spiritual basis when understood. For example, take physiology. It can be boring. However, to know that the brain is an organ which has a gland that, when fully activated, can give one a divine understanding or the 'Eye of Śiva', causes one to look at the organ as more than just a lump of flesh. If this organ has properties that can open one to transcendental and unseen realms of knowledge, it also makes the other bodily organs take on a new and different significance. What are the heart and the whole brain as vehicles of blood flow and consciousness? If the heart is a vehicle, is there a spiritual hearth which goes on beating, even after the body dies? Thinking in this way transforms ordinary anatomy into an area of discovery concerning the whole human being. It is no longer a dull subject, but part of the wisdom which is spiritual knowledge in Plato's dialectical yoga. In *Theaetetus*, Plato insists through the mouth of Socrates that nothing, including any organ of the body, is ever as it seems. In fact all on this plane is in a process of becoming and transforming:

All the things we are pleased to say 'are,' really are in a process of becoming, as result of movement and change and of blending with one another. We are wrong to speak of them as 'being,' for none of them ever is; they are always becoming. In this matter let us take it that, with the exception of Parmenides, the whole series of philosophers agree—Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles—and among the poets the greatest masters in both kinds, Epicharmus in comedy, Homer in tragedy. When Homer speaks of 'Oceanus, source of the gods, and mother of Tethys' (Iliad 14:201, 302), he means that all things are the offspring of a flowing stream of change.³⁷

For Plato, the only Eternal Being is the soul, the self-mover. Although it is the self-mover, it is of the same essence as the immutable *agathon*.

³⁷ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 857.

Although everything in the universe may change, the very being of every human has the changeless within it. As it says in the *Phaedrus*:

All soul is immortal, for that which is ever in motion is immortal. But that which while imparting motion is itself moved by something else can cease to be in motion, and therefore can cease to live; it is only that which moves itself that never intermits its motion, inasmuch as it cannot abandon its own nature; moreover this self-mover is the source and first principle of motion for all other things that are moved. Now a first principle cannot come into being, for while anything that comes to be must come to be from a first principle, the latter itself cannot come to be from anything whatsoever; if it did, it would cease any longer to be a first principle. Furthermore, since it does not come into being, it must be imperishable, for assuredly, if a first principle were to be destroyed, nothing could come to be out of it, nor could anything bring the principle back into existence, seeing that a first principle is needed for anything to come into being.³⁸

It is important to note in this argument that the soul is a self-mover. As in Vedānta philosophy, it is in essence the First Principle, incarnating from body to body. Paradoxically, like the *ātman*, it does not itself change. Its changeless quality, is that it is always connected to that which grows and expands (from the root *brh*) in and of itself. Plato is arguing that the soul is immortal because it must be a self-mover, and therefore does not decay because of dependence on others. He is asserting the same universal principle which is the *brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* and the *parabrahman* or *tat ekam* of the Vedas. The soul, ever in motion, is not separate from that which moves, grows and expands. However, it is essentially THAT WHICH IS or the eternal first principle. The soul is linked to Being Itself, just as *ātman* is in reality *brahman*. But its lower aspect of mind (*manas*) can be corrupted or exalted. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato even employs the same chariot analogy found in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The charioteer must control the dark steed of the senses, and steer the soul to move even through great struggle to a state of consciousness where truth and goodness prevail. Plato's Socrates says, 'It is there that true being dwells, without color or shape, that cannot be touched, reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof.'³⁹

³⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 492.

³⁹ Ibid., 494.

In the end this jñāna yoga is never separated from the paths of devotion and karma in Plato's teachings. As E. J. Urwick understood:

It will be seen that, even in the path of wisdom, the way of 'worship by work' has its place, and that a double place: first as a preparation for the saintship of the seer; secondly as a never-ending function of the fully enlightened soul. In the language of Vedanta, 'no one can be a good Gnani (devotee of wisdom) unless he is also a good Karmi (devotee of work); and the essence of Karma yoga is that the soul thus learns to see the world in obedience to one motive only—the love of God or of Good—and to perform all duty for the sake of God's other children, never for his own sake.⁴⁰

This is the dialectic of Plato and Pythagoras, a supreme method of yoga offered to the West many centuries ago.

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⁴⁰ Urwick, p. 167.

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JUNG'S DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND YOGA SĀDHANA

Patrick Mahaffey

Abstract

The depth psychology C. G. Jung was influenced by his study of Indian thought and centers upon the concept of the self. The self, for Jung, is a primordial image akin to ideas found in the *brahman-ātman* teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. This essay examines affinities and differences between Jung's psychology and yoga *sādhana* including his perspective on mandalas, *tapas*, active imagination, and self-inquiry (*Ātma vicāra*). Special attention is given to Jung's seminar on *kuṇḍalinī* yoga since he regarded *cakra* symbolism to be parallel evidence for individuation from another culture. While the similarities between yoga and his depth psychology are noteworthy, Jung discouraged Western persons from practicing yoga. He felt that a conflict between faith and knowledge and a mind-body split made the practice of yoga ineffectual in the West. Moreover, he believed that the tendency to control nature necessitates that Westerners discover their own nature through self-inquiry. The methods appropriate for this task include active imagination and analyzing the contents of the unconscious via psychotherapy. Jung regarded yoga to be one of the greatest things the human mind has ever created but believed that the spiritual development in the West has been along entirely different lines. He felt that the West would gradually develop its own yoga. While this essay argues that Jung's belief that yoga is not suitable for Westerners is mistaken, it also suggests that his depth psychology is itself a kind of Western yoga.

The aim of the depth psychology of C. G. Jung is to discover and unfold the self. Jung describes the self as the totality of the psyche. It encompasses both conscious awareness and the unconscious; 'it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness.'¹ While Jung's definition of the self comes from his empirical study of the unconscious, he acknowledged his debt to Indian

¹ Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 41. The self, for Jung, is the archetype of wholeness; a superordinate, organizing principle of psychic selfhood. The editors of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* do not capitalize *self*, whether referring to the archetype or simply one's individual ego, leaving it to the context of the passage to indicate which meaning is intended. Throughout this essay I do not capitalize *self* but use this term only to refer to the archetype.

thought. The self is a primordial image akin to the ideas found in the *brahman-ātman* teachings of the *Upaniṣads*.² Jung described the developmental process of discovering the self as individuation, the process by which a person becomes a separate indivisible unity or whole.³ It is the *opus* of a lifetime.

The word yoga is from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, which means 'to yoke.' The aim of the yogin is to join or yoke one's individual consciousness with the source of consciousness. While yoga has been defined in many ways and takes various forms, most scholars and practitioners would agree that yogic practice or *sādhana* aims at expanding awareness from a narrow egoic perspective to a vaster, more encompassing mode of being. As Feuerstein observes, 'Yoga is thus the generic name for the various Indian paths of ecstatic self-transcendence, or the methodical transmutation of consciousness to the point of liberation from the spell of the ego-personality.'⁴ *Sādhana* refers to the self-effort of the yogin, and the spiritual disciplines or practices that are the means to achieving this liberation. The means or methods may vary from one tradition to another. Prominent practices include discrimination between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*), action (*karma-yoga*), love or devotion (*bhakti-yoga*), self-inquiry (*ātma vicāra*), and self-remembrance (*pratyabhijñā*), among others.

This essay examines affinities and differences between Jung's psychology and yoga *sādhana*. It explores Jung's interest in yoga, provides an account of how his psychology emerges from his own life experiences, and examines some of his most salient writings on yoga. Particular attention will be given to the relationship between the ego and the self.

Jung's Interest in 'Eastern Yoga'

Jung had a deep interest in Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist traditions. His study of texts from these traditions helped him formulate his own theories of the psyche. It enabled him to find parallel evidence from other cultures that supported particular concepts in his psychology such as the collective unconscious, the self, and individuation.⁵ Unlike

² Jung, *Psychological Types*, 118.

³ C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 275.

⁴ Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition*, 7.

⁵ See Coward's *Jung and Eastern Thought* and Clark's *Jung and Eastern Thought* for thorough discussions of the influence of Eastern traditions on Jung's psychology.

most of his European predecessors and contemporaries, Jung did not regard the Eastern mind to be an earlier stage in the development of humankind. Rather, he regarded the 'East' to be a complementary aspect of the human personality. Whereas the West had developed and refined the extraverted aspects of the psyche, the cultures of the East had developed the psychological qualities of introversion essential for understanding and control of the inner world. In Jung's view, cultures as well as individuals, can become unbalanced by the over-development of one psychological function or another. He felt that the East was as one-sided as the West but focused on how the East could reveal the lack of balance in the Western psyche.⁶ Jung sought an understanding of the East that would help the West in its quest for spiritual renewal.

For Jung, yoga was a general term that encompassed all of Eastern thought and psychological practice. He used the term to designate traditions as diverse as Hinduism, Indian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism, and Chinese Taoism. His interest and use of the term concerned the spiritual development of the personality.⁷ As Jung put it: 'Yoga was originally a natural process of introversion, with all manner of variations. Introversions of this sort lead to peculiar inner processes which change the personality.'⁸ His concern was not primarily with the methods and teachings of yoga but with the natural processes of introversion that underlie them. Yoga represented a rich storehouse of symbolic depictions of inner experience and of the individuation process. He felt he had discovered important parallels that provided invaluable comparative material for interpreting the collective unconscious.

Jung's Self-Understanding

The distinction between the ego and the self is of central importance to Jung's psychology. The ego is the conditioned personality that develops primarily through interactions with other people. The self or non-ego is a larger psychological reality. It is the dynamic ground of the psyche and matrix out of which the ego arises. While

⁶ Clarke, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, 66–68.

⁷ Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, 3.

⁸ Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 536.

the self is the center and totality of the psyche, encompassing consciousness and the unconscious, most persons are estranged from it. It appears to the ego as the Other. In his memoir, Jung distinguished two personalities within himself. One of these was his public persona while the other was a deeper, more authentic self with roots that transcended the biographical facts of his time and place.

Somewhere deep in the background I always knew that I was two persons. One was the son of my parents, who went to school and was less intelligent, attentive, hard-working, decent, and clean than many other boys. The other was grown up—old, in fact—skeptical, mistrustful, remote from the world of men, but close to nature, the earth, the sun, the moon, the weather, all living creatures, and above all close to the night, to dreams, and to whatever ‘God’ worked directly in him. I put ‘God’ in quotation marks here. For nature seemed, like myself, to have been set aside by God as non-divine, although created by Him and as an expression of Himself. Nothing could persuade me that ‘in the image of God’ applied only to man. In fact it seemed to me that the high mountains, the rivers, trees, flowers, and animals far better exemplified the essence of God than men with their ridiculous clothes, their meanness, vanity, mendacity, and abhorrent egotism—all qualities with which I was only too familiar from myself, that is, from personality No. 1, the schoolboy of 1890. Besides this world there existed another realm, like a temple in which anyone who entered was transformed and suddenly overpowered by a vision of the whole cosmos, so that he could only marvel and admire, forgetful of himself. Here lived the ‘Other,’ who knew god as a hidden, personal, and at the same time suprapersonal secret. Here nothing separated man from God; indeed, it was as though the human mind looked down upon Creation simultaneously with God.⁹

This experience of two personalities does not indicate psychopathology. Rather, it specifies a distinct awareness of two levels of being: a conditioned personality and a transpersonal ground of being. The importance he gives to the deeper level is emblematic of the mode of analytical work he developed in his writings and work with patients.

The play and counterplay between personalities No. 1 and No. 2, which has run through my whole life, has nothing to do with a ‘split’ or dissociation in the ordinary medical sense. In my life No. 2 has been of prime importance, and I have always tried to make room for

⁹ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 44–45.

anything that wanted to come to me from within. He is a typical figure, but he is perceived only by the few. Most people's conscious understanding is not sufficient to realize that he is also what they are.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Jung experienced a profound tension between the two personalities and this precipitated a mid-life crisis. Early in his career he became a close friend and associate of Freud at a time when personality No. 1 was still ascendant. Rosen observes that Jung had to let go of his No. 1 personality as a Freudian in order to discover his authentic self or his repressed No. 2 personality.¹¹ Jung, in effect, committed 'egocide' or symbolic death. His false self or ego-identity as a Freudian needed to be killed so that his authentic being could emerge into the foreground.¹²

The period following Jung's break from Freud was a time of confusion, turmoil, isolation, and loneliness. It was an experience of inner chaos, and for a while he lost his bearings. Jung was assailed with dreams, images, visions, and a surge of unconscious material that made him doubt his own sanity. These were the years of his confrontation with the unconscious. His memoir tells us that one day he sat at his desk, let himself drop, and plunged into the depths of his psyche, submitting to the spontaneous images arising in his unconscious.¹³ This was the beginning of an experiment that lasted for several years and produced a wealth of material, which later became his most important works. Throughout that time, he carefully observed his experiences, wrote them down, and embellished them with his drawings, dreams, fantasies and visions. As a scientist, he felt the obligation to understand the meaning of all of that material. 'I had to draw concrete conclusions from the insight the unconscious had given me—and that task was to become a life's work.'¹⁴

Jung's struggle with the depths of his psyche persisted for about six years. He began to emerge from the darkness as he made mandala drawings and understood their significance. A mandala, for Jung, is an image arising from the unconscious that takes shape in times

¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹¹ See Rosen, *The Tao of Jung*, 51–58.

¹² Ibid., 57.

¹³ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 179.

¹⁴ Ibid., 188.

of psychic disorganization and inner chaos. It is the psyche's way of restoring balance and order. Jung discovered that each mandala he drew was an expression of his inner state of being at that particular time. As his psychic state changed, so did the mandala he would spontaneously sketch. He understood that both the process and goal of making mandalas required that he 'abandon the idea of the super-ordinate position of the ego.' Jung further explained:

I was being compelled to go through this process of the unconscious. I had to let myself be carried along by the current, without a notion of where it would lead me. When I began drawing the mandalas, however, I saw that everything, all the paths I had been following, all the steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point—namely, the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the center. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation.¹⁵

This insight gave Jung stability and gradually restored his inner peace. It had great significance for his life and his psychology. 'I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate. Perhaps someone else knows more, but not I.'¹⁶

This period of Jung's life proved to be decisive for his work. He writes: 'The years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important in my life—in them everything essential was decided. It all began then; the later details are only supplements and clarifications of the material that burst forth from the unconscious, and at first swamped me. It was the *prima materia* for a lifetime's work.'¹⁷ I suggest that this inner work has affinities to intense yoga *sādhana*, especially tantric practices, and that Jung's understanding of mandalas as symbols for the self is an intriguing parallel between his depth psychology and yoga.

Yoga Sādhana and Active Imagination

Jung was familiar with the yogic practice of *tapas*. He described this process as 'self-brooding' or introspection. He derived his under-

¹⁵ Ibid., 196.

¹⁶ Ibid., 197.

¹⁷ Ibid., 199.

standing of the process from Vedic hymns that depict Prajāpati as the cosmic germ incubating in the form of a golden egg, which becomes the world of diverse forms.¹⁸ Accordingly, he regarded *tapas* to be a means to creativity. In Jung's view, the yogin practicing *tapas* seeks to concentrate his psyche by accumulating libido. This is done by withdrawing libido from both external objects and interior thoughts. This practice is akin to the process of active imagination in Jung's psychology.¹⁹ In yoga, meditation upon an image or object is a means for achieving one-pointed attention or concentration (*dhāraṇā*) as part of a process that culminates in meditation (*dhyāna*) and ecstasy (*samādhi*). Similarly, images are useful in analytical work as a means of accessing the unconscious. There is, however, an important difference. Jung did not prescribe a particular object, image, or set of exercises for engaging in active imagination.

In his memoir, Jung disclosed that he practiced yoga during the time of his confrontation with the unconscious. 'I was frequently so wrought up that I had to eliminate the emotions through yoga practices. But since it was my purpose to learn what was going on within myself, I would do them only until I had calmed myself and could take up again the work with the unconscious.'²⁰ However, Jung states that his aim differs from the practice of yoga. 'As soon as I had the feeling that I was myself again, I abandoned this restraint upon the emotions and allowed the images and inner voices to speak afresh. The Indian, on the other hand, does yoga exercises in order to obliterate completely the multitude of psychic contents and images.'²¹ Jung's aim was to dialogue with the contents of the unconscious. In such dialogue, the conscious ego plays an important role. It must be strong enough to withstand the power of the unconscious.

James Hillman offers an instructive discussion of free association, active imagination and yoga discipline. In spiritual disciplines, attention is focused upon already given or known images. In Zen, there may be no image but a koan or task given to the practitioner by the teacher. In any case, the focus is prescribed and one knows when one is wavering. In active imagination, attention is given to whatever

¹⁸ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 380.

¹⁹ Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, 34–35.

²⁰ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 177.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

images, emotions or body parts arise in the mind. Distractions are not suppressed but followed attentively. This method, he suggests, is half way between the free-association of the Freudians and the traditional discipline of rigid fixity upon a given image. Active imagination develops a more personal psychological fantasy with the material that arises. It is concerned with the ego's relations with and personal reactions to the mental images. The emotional involvement with these images and their spontaneous reactions to the ego's attitude are as important as the images themselves.²²

This distinction between yoga meditation and active imagination underscores an important difference between Jung's psychology and yoga. The ego, for Jung, must play an important role in the life of an analysand or individuating person. Yet, the ego is problematic. It is dissociated from the unconscious and typically suffers from a one-sided attitude towards one's life experiences. Its perspective is incomplete, distorted and alienated from its depths. Psychological wholeness depends upon a person having access to the archetypes of the unconscious. Methods such as dream work and active imagination fulfill this role in analytical work, but this requires that the ego position remain intact. The relationship between the ego and the unconscious has been described as the 'ego-self relation' or 'ego-self axis.'²³

Jung's entire psychology centers upon this relationship though it is often a problematic one. The first half of life involves ego development accompanied by a progressive separation between ego and the self (ego-self separation). The second half of life, however, requires the surrender or relativization of the ego as it experiences and relates to the self (ego-self reunion). The conscious work of individuation

²² Hillman, 'Psychological Commentary,' 40–41. Hillman specifies the distinctive quality of each of these three processes: If the quality of free-association can be judged by its uninhibited-ness (lack of suppression), and the quality of a disciplined meditation can be judged by its unwavering fixity and undistractedness, the quality of active imagination can be judged by its emotional intensity, which intensity is given by the opposition between the ego position of the conscious mind and the various figures, images, and intentions of the unconscious psyche. Hence, it is called *active* imagination in that the ego not only attends, not only suppresses what does not belong (as in a spiritual exercise), but actively takes part in the drama or dialogue which unfolds by asking questions, experiencing emotions, pressing towards solutions.

²³ Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 4–7.

requires, from a psychological standpoint, a 'religious attitude' or careful and scrupulous observation of one's psychological life.²⁴ It consists of an effort to discover the self, and to keep in tune with it so that it becomes an inner partner toward whom one's attention is continually turned.²⁵ This process requires vigilance and intense inner work. I suggest it is a kind of Western analogue to yogic self-inquiry (*ātma vicāra*).

Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and Individuation

Tantric yoga also influenced Jung's psychology. In particular, he regarded the *cakra* symbolism of *kuṇḍalinī* yoga to be parallel evidence of individuation from another culture. Jung gave in-depth lectures on this subject in 1932 when the Indologist J. W. Hauer came to Zurich to give a seminar on the topic. In Jung's view, the aim of Indian philosophy is to bring about a connection between the non-ego and the conscious ego. The non-ego is the dynamic ground or matrix out of which the ego emerges. Tantric yoga provides a representation of the developmental phases of the impersonal or transpersonal aspect of the psyche.²⁶ *Kuṇḍalinī*, for Jung, is the divine urge that animates the individuation process. As Jung put it: 'Expressed in psychological terms . . . you can approach the unconscious in only one way, namely, by a purified mind, by a right attitude, and by the grace of heaven, which is the Kundalini. Something in you, an urge in you, must lead you to it. . . . And that spark is the Kundalini.'²⁷ The *cakra*-s, on this account, 'symbolize complex psychic facts which at the present moment we could not possibly express except in images.' Jung noted that 'the *cakras* are of great value to us because they represent a real effort to give a symbolic theory of the psyche.'²⁸ He also points out that this kind of theory differs from Western approaches to the psyche:

²⁴ Franz, 'The Process of Individuation,' 210.

²⁵ Raff, *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination*, 2–13.

²⁶ Shamdasani, 'Introduction: Jung's Journey to the East,' xxiii.

²⁷ Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, 21–22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 61. Jung explained that his own interest in *kuṇḍalinī* developed through an encounter with a European woman brought up in the East who presented dreams and fantasies that he could not understand until he came across Sir John Woodroffe's

The cakras, then, become a valuable guide for us in this obscure field because the East, and India especially, has always tried to understand the psyche as a whole. It has an intuition of the self, and therefore it sees the ego and consciousness as only more or less unessential parts of the self. All this seems very strange to us: it appears as though India were fascinated by the background of consciousness, because we ourselves are entirely identified with our foreground, with the conscious.²⁹

This observation is insightful and accords with my prior discussion of yoga *sādhana* and active imagination. Jung's interest and emphasis is with the symbolic content that arises out of the unconscious rather than with consciousness or awareness itself.

There is an important difference, however, between analyzing or working with symbolic material and identifying with it. Jung notes that if a yogin or Western person succeeds in awakening *kuṇḍalinī*, what unfolds must not be regarded in terms of personal development though the process can have a favorable effect upon the person. Jung explains that what takes place are *impersonal* happenings in the psyche that must be observed from a stance of detachment.³⁰

Jung's comments on particular cakras are scattered throughout the transcript of the seminar. This discussion begins with his observations regarding the *mūlādhāra cakra* located at the base of the spine. Jung described this as the experience of the conscious world where people live and function as reasonable, adapted individuals. It is the ordinary world of transactions such as purchasing tickets or paying the waiter for a meal at a restaurant. When life is lived primarily in this way, the ego is conscious but the self is asleep.³¹ Nevertheless, being grounded in *mūlādhāra* is essential for human development. As Jung put it:

The convictions of the *mūlādhāra* are very necessary. It is exceedingly important that you are rational, that you believe in the definiteness of the world, that the world is the culmination of history. . . . Such a conviction is absolutely vital. Otherwise you remain detached from the

book entitled *The Serpent Power*. Jung claimed that the symbolism of *kuṇḍalinī* yoga suggested that the bizarre symptoms that patients present actually result from the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*. He argued that knowledge of such symbolism enables one to see the symptoms as a meaningful symbolic process. See Shamdasani, 'Introduction: Jung's Journey to the East,' xxiv–xxvi.

²⁹ Ibid., 61–62.

³⁰ Ibid., 27.

³¹ Ibid., 14.

mūlādhāra—you never get there, you are never born. There are plenty of people who are not yet born, even. They seem to be all here, they walk about—but as a matter of fact, they are not yet born, because they are behind a glass wall, they are in the womb. . . . They have not formed a connection with this world; they are suspended in the air; they are neurotic, living the provisional life. . . . Now, it is most important that you should be born; you ought to come into this world—otherwise, you cannot realize the self.³²

Jung described the second *cakra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna*, as the mandala of baptism. It entails a descent into the sea or unconscious. 'One goes under the water, makes the acquaintance of the leviathan there, and that is either the source of regeneration or destruction.'³³ This *cakra*, in Jung's view, has all the attributes that characterize the unconscious. The path to higher development leads through water and includes the danger of being swallowed by the monster (the makara in Hindu symbolism). For Jung, the sea or leviathan is analysis, a process that is equally dangerous. It entails working through personal complexes and repressed material. These complexes and issues comprise the 'shadow' in Jung's psychology and correspond to the personal layer of the unconscious.

This process of working through personal material continues as a person engages the energies of the *maṇipūra*, the third *cakra*. *Maṇipūra* is the fire center, the center of emotions. Jung characterized it this way:

Desire, passions, the whole emotional world breaks loose. Sex, power, and every devil in our nature gets loose when we become acquainted with the unconscious. Then you will suddenly see a new picture of yourself. That is why people are afraid and say there is no unconscious, like children playing hide-and-seek.³⁴

After the baptism or descent into the waters of the unconscious one enters into the world of fire: the fire of passion, wishes, and illusions. A person's ability to experience and tolerate strong affective material is essential for psychological development. It provides the fuel for transformation. Jung stressed that this fire or heat is the key to a vital life.

³² Ibid., 28–29.

³³ Ibid., 17.

³⁴ Ibid., 33.

A man who is not on fire is nothing; he is ridiculous, he is two-dimensional. . . . A flame must burn somewhere, otherwise no light shines; there is no warmth, nothing. It is terribly awkward, sure enough; it is painful, full of conflict, apparently a mere waste of time—at all events, it is against reason. But that accursed Kundalini says, ‘It is the fullness of jewels; there is the source of energy.’³⁵

Joseph Campbell noted that the biological drives connected to the first three *cakra*-s dominate the first 35 years of a person’s life, a view that is quite compatible with Jung’s perspective on human development. If these energies are unconstrained, they become devastating. To transcend this order of life requires an awakening of the heart. This entails ‘the turning about of the energy, which is to say, simply, an application of all the available malice and aggression of Chakra 3, not outward to the correction of the world, but inward, upon oneself.’³⁶

For Jung, this transformation correlates with the psychology of the fourth *cakra*, *anāhata*, located in the region of the heart. He noted that in *anāhata* something new happens in the psyche. It is the possibility of lifting one’s self above the emotional events and dramas of one’s life. In doing so, one beholds the *puruṣa* in his heart. This discovery of the divine self is something different from ‘mere causality, mere nature, a mere release of energy that runs down blindly with no purpose.’³⁷ Instead, there is a possibility that one can detach from emotional entanglements and, when this possibility is discovered, one really becomes a human being. Prior to this, one is in the womb of nature living a life that is largely an automatic or unconscious process. Thus, it is in *anāhata* that individuation begins.³⁸

But what does this mean? Jung warns that the impetus for individuation may lead to an inflation. An inflation of this sort entails an identification of the ego with the self. For this reason, Jung insisted that individuation does not mean that a person becomes an ego or individualist. An individualist, he maintained, is a person who did not succeed at individuating. Jung defined the problem this way: ‘Individuation is becoming that thing which is not the ego, and that is very strange. Therefore, nobody understands what the self is,

³⁵ Ibid., 34.

³⁶ Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, 66.

³⁷ Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, 39.

³⁸ Ibid.

because the self is just the thing you are not, which is not the ego. The ego discovers itself as a mere appendix of the self.³⁹ This discovery is the first inkling of a being within one's self that is greater than one's self-concept or sense of one's self as a personality. Drawing on the perspective of tantra yoga, Jung describes this being as the *puruṣa*, the essence of a human being, the so-called primordial man, and it becomes visible in *anāhata*. This being is much greater and much more important than the ego. It has an entirely psychological existence.⁴⁰ Jung noted that in analysis the suprapersonal process can begin only when the personal life has been assimilated to consciousness. At that point psychology opens up a standpoint and types of experience that are found beyond ego consciousness. He adds that the same thing happens in tantric philosophy but the difference is that the ego plays no role in the process.⁴¹

Jung observed that we do not yet trust psychical existence and thus Westerners have not reached the level of development symbolized by the *viśuddha cakra*. It is beyond our actual conception of the world. 'It is the realm of abstract ideas and values, the world where the psyche is in itself, where the psychical reality is the only reality or where matter is a thin skin around an enormous cosmos of psychical realities.'⁴² The primary reality for Westerners is a world consisting of matter. In Jung's view, we have not yet found the bridge between the ideas of physics and psychology though Jung himself attempted such a bridge in his collaboration with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli.⁴³ Jung offered a brief commentary on the perspective associated with the *viśuddha cakra*. He suggested that one's understanding of the world becomes profoundly psychological. 'You begin to consider the game of the world as your own game, the people that appear outside as exponents of your psychical condition. Whatever befalls you, whatever experience or adventure you have in the external world is your own experience. The world itself becomes a reflection of the psyche.'⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 45–46.

⁴¹ Ibid, 66.

⁴² Ibid, 47.

⁴³ Ibid., 46. See Jung and Pauli, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*, for two essays that explore the bridge between physics and psychology.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 50.

This observation regarding the *viśuddha cakra* seems to sum up Jung's description of psychological life in the West. He felt it did not help to speculate about the *ājñā* and *sahasrāra cakra*-s since they go beyond the range of Westerners' experience. Nevertheless, he did make an interesting comment on the *ājñā cakra* that brings a certain completion to his commentary on the *cakra*-s as evidence of individuation from another culture.

The God that has been dormant in *mūlādhāra* is here fully awake, the only reality, and therefore this centre has been called the condition in which one is united with *Śiva*. One could say it was the centre of the *unio mystica* with the power of God, meaning that absolute reality where one is nothing but psychic reality, yet confronted with psychic reality that one is not. And that is the God. God is the eternal psychical object. God is simply a word for the non-ego.⁴⁵

In the *ājñā* center 'the psyche gets wings' and a person knows that he is nothing but psyche. Yet, according to Jung, 'there is another psyche, a counterpart to one's psychical reality, the non-ego reality, the thing that is not even to be called the self. . . . The ego disappears completely; the psychical is no longer a content in us, but we become contents of it.'⁴⁶ This condition, he added, is almost unimaginable. Indeed, this is a rare instance in which Jung affirms the possibility of experience devoid of ego.

An experience beyond the level of human development symbolized by the *sahasrāra cakra* seems to transcend the limits of Jung's psychology. In the seminar on *kuṇḍalinī* yoga, he made this observation:

To speak about the lotus of the thousand petals above, the *sahasrāra* centre, is quite superfluous because that is merely a philosophical concept with no substance whatever for us; it is beyond any possible experience. In *ājñā* there is still the experience of the self that is apparently different from the object, the God. But in *sahasrāra* it is not different from the object, God. But in *sahasrāra* one understands that it is not different, and so the next conclusion would be that there is no object, no God, nothing but *brahman*. There is no experience because it is one, it is without a second. It is dormant, it is not, and therefore it is *nirvana*. This is an entirely philosophical speculative concept, a mere logical conclusion from the premises before. It is without practical value for us.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Nevertheless, this judgment may be qualified in several ways. First, 'for us' refers to Western people who lack a system of contemplative practice that is as sophisticated as yoga. Second, there is a passage in the seminar transcript, in an appendix, which affirms a connection between the aims of yoga and individuation. In it, Jung goes so far as to affirm the idea of consciousness without an object.

In every typical course of an analysis greater awareness emerges through realizing repressions, projections, and so on. The analytical process thus occasions a broadening of consciousness, but the relation of the ego to its objects still remains. The ego is intertwined in conflict with the objects—one is still a part of a process. Only in the continuation of the analysis does the analogy with yoga set in, in that consciousness is severed from its objects. . . . This process is linked up with the process of individuation, which begins with the self severing itself as unique from the objects and the ego. It is as if consciousness separated from the objects and from the ego and emigrated to the non-ego—to the other center, to the foreign yet originally own. This detachment of consciousness is the freeing from the *tamas* and *rajas*, a freeing from the passions and from the entanglement with the realm of objects. This is something which I cannot prove philosophically any further. It is a psychical experience, which in practice is expressed as a feeling of deliverance. What has caused one to be previously seized with panic is not a panic any more; one is capable of seeing the tension of the opposites of the world without agitation. One does not become apathetic but is freed from entanglement. Consciousness is removed to a sphere of objectlessness. This experience has its effects in practical life, and indeed in the most palpable way. It is illustrated probably most beautifully in the tale of Buddha being threatened by Mara. Mara and all his demons assail him, but the throne of Buddha is empty—he is simply not sitting there any more. Or as the *Rig Veda* I, 164 has it: 'Two closely united friends both embrace one and the same tree. One of them eats the sweet berry, the other looks down only composedly.'⁴⁸

This passage reveals that Jung was conversant with the *guṇa* theory of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy. He regarded the emotional entanglements associated with *tamas* and *rajas* with the early phases of analytical work, the process of working through the shadow material associated with the first three *cakra*-s. The real aim of individuation begins with *anāhata* and entails the capacity of a person to detach from the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 82–83.

sense objects, emotional complexes, and identification with the ego. Here one may have a profound experience of deliverance from the ordinary travails of life. It is a mode of being that is grounded in the non-ego or self that observes or witnesses the tensions and opposites of worldly existence.

There is a third way in which the conclusions of Jung's seminar may be qualified. The seminar was given in 1932, thirty years prior to his death. Marvin Spiegelman, a contemporary Jungian analyst, wonders if Jung might have described the psychology of the *ājñā* and *sahasrāra cakras* differently if he had commented on them later in his life.⁴⁹ Indeed, this is suggested in a dream included in Jung's memoir where he discovers himself to be a yogi meditating in a temple.

I was walking along a little road through a hilly landscape; the sun was shining and I had a wide view in all directions. Then I came to a small wayside chapel. The door was ajar, and I went in. To my surprise there was no image of the Virgin on the altar, and no crucifix either, but only a wonderful flower arrangement. But then I saw that on the floor in front of the altar, facing me, sat a yogi—in lotus posture, in deep meditation. When I looked at him more closely, I realized that he had my face. I started in profound fright, and awoke with the thought: 'Aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream, and I am it.' I knew that when he awakened, I would no longer be.

I had this dream after my illness in 1944. It is a parable: My self retires into meditation and meditates my earthly form. To put it another way: it assumes human shape in order to enter three-dimensional existence, as if someone were putting on a diver's suit in order to dive into the sea. When it renounces existence in the hereafter, the self assumes a religious posture, as the chapel in the dream shows. In earthly form it can pass through the experiences of the three-dimensional world, and by greater awareness take a further step toward realization.

The figure of the yogi, then, would more or less represent my unconscious prenatal wholeness, and the Far East, as is often the case in dreams, a psychic state alien and opposed to our own. . . . The yogi's meditation 'projects' my empirical reality. As a rule, we see this causal relationship in reverse: in the products of the unconscious we discover mandala symbols, that is, circular and quaternary figures which express

⁴⁹ Spiegelman, *Hinduism and Jungian Psychology*, 56.

wholeness, and whenever we wish to express wholeness, we employ such figures. Our basis is ego-consciousness, our world the field of light centered upon the focal point of the ego. From that point we look out upon an enigmatic world of obscurity, never knowing to what extent the shadowy forms we see are caused by our consciousness, or possess a reality of their own. The superficial observer is content with the first assumption. But closer study shows that as a rule the images of the unconscious are not produced by consciousness, but have a reality and spontaneity of their own. Nevertheless, we regard them as mere marginal phenomena.⁵⁰

Jung notes that the aim of the dream is to effect a reversal of the relationship between ego consciousness and the unconscious, and that it depicts the unconscious as the source of phenomenal reality.

This reversal suggests that in the opinion of the 'other side,' our unconscious existence is the real one and our conscious world a kind of illusion, an apparent reality constructed for a specific purpose, like a dream which seems a reality as long as we are in it. It is clear that this state of affairs resembles very closely the Oriental conception of Maya.⁵¹

Jung's reflections on this dream convey a perspective on life that resonates with the aim of yoga. Unconscious wholeness seems to inhere in all biological and psychic events. He regarded this to be a principle that strives for total realization. In the human instance, it signifies the attainment of total consciousness. This attainment is culture in the broadest sense, and self-knowledge is the heart and essence of this process. The decisive question, in Jung's view, is whether humankind is related to something infinite or not.

Only if we know that thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interest upon futilities, and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance. Thus we demand that the world grant us recognition for qualities which we regard as personal possessions. . . . The more a man lays stress on false possessions, and the less sensitivity he has for what is essential, the less satisfying is his life. He feels limited because he has limited aims, and the result is envy and jealousy. If we understand and feel that here in this life we already have a link with the infinite, desires and attitudes change. In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted.⁵²

⁵⁰ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 323–24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 324–25.

This attitude evokes values and priorities associated with yoga. An experiential relationship with the infinite is more important than finite goals, self-realization (*mokṣa*) is more essential and fulfilling than wealth (*artha*), and a life worth living surpasses the limitations of ordinary desires and ambitions.

Toward a Western Form of Yoga

This essay has explored affinities and differences between Jung's depth psychology and yoga *sādhana*. Both approaches to psychological and spiritual development aim at expanding awareness from a narrow egoic perspective to a vaster, more encompassing mode of being. Jung's interest in yoga was deep and pioneering among Western psychologists. His self-understanding distinguished between the ego (personality No. 1) and the self (personality No. 2). This theme persisted through his life and is conveyed in his dream of himself as a yogi meditating his embodied ego personality in a shrine. Jung understood the yogic practice of *tapas* and likened it to introspection and the technique of active imagination specific to his form of psychoanalysis. He understood human development to be a journey that begins with prenatal wholeness (ego-self identification) and the subsequent differentiation of the ego from its matrix or dynamic ground. This project constitutes the first half of life and culminates in the travails of midlife, where the ego is typically alienated from the self. This condition may lead to a descent into the unconscious that occasions the possibility of psychological rebirth. If this is negotiated successfully, the ego rediscovers its ground, the self, and enters into a dialogue with it.

Jung described this process as individuation and felt that the symbolism of *kundalīnī* yoga constituted a parallel example from another culture. This mode of yoga provides a representation of the impersonal or transpersonal aspect of the psyche. The task in Jung's depth psychology, as in yoga *sādhana*, is to work through the complexes and passions associated with the first three *cakra*-s. When this is achieved, something new happens in the psyche. One is able to detach from emotional entanglements that typify a highly conditioned life. One glimpses the *ātman* or self. Subsequent development is rare in the West. Nonetheless, Jung offered insights into what this entails. A person comes to see that what happens in the external world is one's

own experience and that the world itself is a reflection of the psyche. Beyond that, it is possible to discover another psychic reality that one is not. Jung described this reality as God or the non-ego.

Through psychoanalysis, an individual achieves greater awareness through uncovering repressions and retrieving projections but the relation of the ego to its objects remains. But Jung affirms that it is possible to go further than that and there lies the analogy between psychoanalysis and yoga. It is as if consciousness separates from objects and the ego and emigrates to the non-ego. This detachment liberates a person from *tamas* and *rajas guṇa*-s and brings a profound feeling of deliverance.

These affinities between Jung's depth psychology and yoga are significant but there are differences as well. Jung discouraged Western persons from practicing yoga. He believed that Westerners experience a conflict between faith and knowledge. This entails a mind-body split that makes the practice of yoga ineffectual. Jung described this in his essay 'Yoga and the West.'

The West . . . with its bad habit of wanting to believe on the one hand, and its highly developed scientific and philosophical critique on the other, finds itself in a real dilemma. Either it falls into the trap of faith and swallows concepts like *prāṇa*, *ātman*, *cakra*, *samādhi*, etc., without giving them a thought, or its scientific critique repudiates them one and all as 'pure mysticism.' The split in the Western mind therefore makes it impossible at the outset for the intentions of yoga to be realized in an adequate way. It becomes either a strictly religious matter, or a kind of training . . . and not a trace is to be found of the unity and wholeness of nature which is characteristic of yoga. The Indian can forget neither the body nor the mind, while the European is always forgetting either one or the other. With this capacity to forget he has, for the time being, conquered the world. Not so the Indian. He not only knows his own nature, but he knows also how much he himself is nature. The European, on the other hand, has a science of nature and knows astonishingly little of his own nature, the nature within him. For the Indian, it comes as a blessing to know of a method which helps him to control the supreme power of nature within and without.⁵³

However, the Western tendency to control nature is dangerous. It manifests as a will to power or power complex and is evident, for example, in the vast power of science, technology, and weaponry.

⁵³ Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 533.

Consequently, Jung wrote that he could not wish the European more 'control' and more power over the nature within and around us.⁵⁴

Instead, Jung felt Westerners need to rediscover their own nature. Self-inquiry is needed. As Jung put it: 'Quite another question begins to loom: *Who* is applying this technical skill? in *whose* hands does this power lie?' The urgent question concerns 'how the man who is entrusted with the control of this skill should be constituted, or how to alter the mind of Western man so that he would renounce his terrible skill. It is infinitely more important to strip him of the illusion of his power than to strengthen him further in the mistaken idea that he can do everything as he will.'⁵⁵ Without this inquiry, Jung believed that the West would turn yoga into a mere technique. Yoga may be useful as a form of hygiene or physical exercise, but Jung felt that it is much more than that. In his view, it is 'the final release and detachment of consciousness from all bondage to object and subject. But since one cannot detach oneself from something of which one is unconscious, the European must first learn his subject. This, in the West, is what one calls the unconscious.'⁵⁶

So, how should Westerners undertake this inquiry? What methods are most appropriate? In Jung's view, there are two cultural achievements in the West that have produced methods comparable to yoga. One of these is the Catholic cure of souls and the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. The second is modern psychotherapy. Freud's psychoanalysis leads the conscious mind back to the inner world of childhood reminiscences and to wishes and drives that have been repressed from consciousness. In Jung's view, this is a logical development of confession and aims at an artificial introversion that brings to awareness the unconscious components of a person. Paying attention to dreams is also part of this process. This is valuable so far as it goes, but Jung regarded Freud's procedure to be reductive. The unconscious, for Freud, is essentially an appendage of consciousness. Jung, by contrast, held that the unconscious is a collective psychic disposition and that it is creative in character. This viewpoint results in an entirely different evaluation of its symbolism and the method of interpreting it. Jung believed that his method has significant

⁵⁴ Ibid., 534.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 534–35.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 535.

parallels with *kuṇḍalinī* yoga, the symbolism of tantric yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, and Taoist yoga. Still, Jung did not apply or recommend yoga methods. His conviction was that nothing ought to be forced on the unconscious. The task, in his view, was to help the unconscious reach the conscious mind and to free it from its rigidity. The method of active imagination is what Jung recommends for this purpose.⁵⁷ While Jung regarded yoga to be one of the greatest things the human mind ever created, he maintained that the spiritual development of the West has been along entirely different lines.⁵⁸

Jung did not anticipate the degree to which yoga would take root in the West during the past thirty years. Millions of American and Europeans participate in yoga classes and there are thousands of trained yoga teachers in the United States and Europe. To a great extent, these practitioners engage in yoga as a system or technique of physical exercise (*hatha* yoga) rather than a practice that liberates consciousness from its attachments to 'the ten thousand things' or the emotional afflictions that arise from the unconscious.⁵⁹ Still, there are thousands of Westerners who have practiced forms of Hindu and Buddhist meditation for two decades or more under the guidance of competent teachers and gurus. This development is more prominent and efficacious than the resurgence in Christian contemplative practices, though there has been a resurgence of the latter in the form of Thomas Keating's centering prayer and similar practices.⁶⁰ Moreover, a rich dialogue has unfolded between depth psychologists and Hindus and Buddhists exploring the complementarity of psychotherapy and meditation. Many of its participants include psychotherapists who have also practiced meditation for 20 or more years.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 537.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Muramoto, Young-Eisendrath, and Middeldorf, 'The Jung-Hisamatsu Conversation,' 116. In 1958, three years before his death, Jung engaged in a dialogue with Shin-ichi Hisamatsu, a leading Zen philosopher of modern Japan. Hisamatsu asked Jung if he thought that liberation could be achieved through psychotherapy. Jung affirmed that it was possible provided that one was liberated both from the unnecessary suffering fostered by lust, desire, and passion. As Jung put it, 'If someone is caught in the ten thousand things, it is because that person is also caught in the collective unconscious. A person is liberated only when freed from both. One person may be driven more by the unconscious and another by things. One has to take the person to the point where he is free from the compulsion to either run after things or be driven by the unconscious.'

⁶⁰ See Keating, *Foundations for Centering Prayer and the Christian Contemplative Life*.

⁶¹ Some of the more important dialogues include Engler, 'Therapeutic Aims in

Thus, Jung's notion that the practice of yoga is not suitable for Westerners misses the mark. 'Eastern yoga' has been a great catalyst for spiritual renewal in the West, as Jung noted. However, it is more than a metaphor for the renewal that is taking place today. Yoga has proven to be both a viable and vital form of spiritual practice for Americans, Europeans, and others as well. This development is more than a passing fad. Yoga has taken root and is likely to be a significant part of the Western spiritual landscape in the future. Furthermore, the dialogue between depth psychology and practitioners of various forms of yoga meditation (Hindu and Buddhist) may be the basis for the mutual enrichment of these respective paths to self-awareness. Gradually, Jung believed, the West would produce its own yoga.⁶² I suggest that his depth psychology is a significant step in that direction.

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Psychotherapy and Meditation;' Harris, *Jung and Yoga: The Psyche-Body Connection*; Epstein, *Thoughts Without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective*; Rubin, *Psychotherapy and Buddhism: Towards an Integration*; and Muramoto and Young-Eisendrath, *Awakening and Insight: Zen Buddhism and Psychotherapy*.

⁶² Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 537.

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YOGA IN AMERICA: SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE HEARTLAND

Wade Dazey

Abstract

This article begins with a brief sketch of the introduction of yoga into America, from Henry David Thoreau and the Transcendentalists to Swāmi Vivekānanda and Paramahansa Yogānanda. It then tries to discern which aspects of yoga (specifically, Hatha yoga postures, classical Yoga philosophy, and Vedānta philosophy) have most interested Americans, and why. Not surprisingly, the author concludes that the detailed physical aspects of yoga have been more readily accepted into mainstream America than the details of Yoga philosophy. Indeed, yoga postures and exercises have been appropriated by mainstream American culture to such an extent, even in the 'Heartland' of middle America, that many Americans are no longer aware of yoga's Hindu origins. More surprisingly, perhaps, is the conclusion that beyond physical benefits there is another reason why yoga has fascinated many Americans. This reason is psychological and spiritual, namely that the idea of the 'self' in Yoga—and particularly the 'Self' of Vedānta philosophy—has deep affinities with certain strains in American forms of Christianity.

What is the status of yoga in America today? I offer here some personal reflections on yoga practice in mainstream American culture after its hundred-plus years in this country. I call these 'reflections from the Heartland' given my particular vantage point as a teacher of undergraduate general education courses at a regional comprehensive university in the American Midwest.¹

¹ After finishing my Ph.D. at UC-Santa Barbara under the supervision of Gerald Larson, I came here to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 1989. This campus in southeast Wisconsin has about ten thousand students, mostly undergraduate, and mostly career oriented. A high percentage of the students come from homes within a fifty-mile radius of the campus, and many are from small towns. My own connection with yoga is through the Vedānta Society, which I describe in this essay. I first heard about Vedānta in the late 1950's while still in my early teen years and living in Santa Barbara, California, through our neighbors, three elderly ladies. They were members of the Vedānta Society of Southern California, and I later learned that the relatives of one of them, the Leggetts, had met and hosted Vivekānanda himself at their home in New York state many years earlier.

Yoga has been known in America for over 110 years, indirectly beginning with the New England Transcendentalists in the mid-nineteenth century, and more directly since 1893 through the public lectures of Swāmi Vivekānanda, ‘America’s first Hindu,’ who came to represent Hinduism at the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago.² Vivekānanda was one of the most popular speakers at the Parliament, and his talks were widely covered in the popular press of the day. During the following two years, and also during a second visit to the U.S. in 1899, he was invited to give talks on Hinduism, Vedānta and Yoga at churches and colleges and in public auditoriums of major cities across the U.S. Vedānta Societies were started in New York—and later in Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Portland, and Los Angeles—to carry on the teaching of Vedānta that Swāmi Vivekānanda initiated.³ Leaders from other Hindu lineages and traditions came to America over the years in Vivekānanda’s wake, offering their own teachings of yoga and Vedānta. In 1920 Paramahansa Yogānanda came to attend a meeting of the International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston, and stayed on for the remainder of this life, founding the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles. This became the largest movement in America based on Hindu and yoga teachings, offering a mail-order course on yoga, and publish-

² It is difficult, of course, to assign an exact date. The epithet ‘America’s First Hindu’ is from Diana L. Eck in *A New Religious America* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 96. One might make a case that Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists introduced educated Americans to yoga as well as to Hindu philosophy generally. Henry David Thoreau had a copy of the *Bhagavad Gītā* with him at his cabin on Walden Pond, and apparently considered himself a kind of yogi. Diana Eck discusses this in the chapter on ‘American Hindus’ in her book on American religious pluralism. She quotes Thoreau who wrote in 1845 ‘In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical [sic.] Philosophy of the Bhagavat-Geeta.’ Eck concludes: ‘Some say Thoreau’s interest in yoga practice and his self-image as a kind of yogi on the shores of Walden was simply a literary self-presentation, a faddish device. But a few scholars, more familiar with the Indian literature Thoreau knew, see Thoreau as finding in yoga—which he understands generally as contemplative practice—a confirmation of his own ecstatic, mystical experience. [But] Thoreau was not a Hindu’ (*A New Religious America*, p. 96). In addition to Chicago, Vivekānanda spoke in other Midwest cities such as Detroit, Memphis, Des Moines, and Minneapolis. He found an especially sympathetic audience among Unitarians in New England, and on the West Coast. The first Vedānta Society was founded by Swāmi Vivekānanda in New York and dates back to 1894.

³ There are now sixteen independent, self-supporting Vedānta Societies in the United States, Europe and South America, all under the spiritual guidance of the Ramakrishna Order of India.

ing Yogānanda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which became a perennial best-seller. Up to 1960 there were very few Hindus in the U.S., and most members of the organizations mentioned above were not of Hindu background. Members were mostly Christian and mostly Protestant. This changed dramatically after the Immigration Act of 1965 allowed a large number of Hindus to emigrate to the U.S. from India. By the end of the 20th century there were over one million Hindus in the U.S., with Hindu temple associations across America established by Hindus themselves to meet the needs of increasing numbers of Hindu immigrants. Also, starting around this time in the mid-1960's, yoga and meditation really became visible in popular culture when the Beatles became for a time followers of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation movement.

Before sharing my reflections I first need to set some limits, and make a distinction. I will not in this essay be looking at this extraordinary growth of Hinduism and Hindu temple associations in America resulting from recent Hindu immigration, a phenomenon Diana Eck, the prominent Harvard director of the Pluralism Project, calls 'Temple Hinduism.'⁴ Rather, I will consider only the appropriation, or adoption, of yoga by Americans of predominantly non-Hindu, Judeo-Christian background. Secondly I need to distinguish between popular, or Haṭha yoga, and classical Yoga.⁵

Classical Yoga is one of the six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy and as such is a traditional Hindu path to liberation from rebirth. Although this ancient Indian *darśana* (philosophy of liberation), with its practice of *samādhi* (enstasis) and its goal of *kaivalya* (spiritual isolation) has been thoroughly studied by Western Indologists, it still seems esoteric and out of place here in the 'Heartland,' in contemporary small town America. I believe classical Hindu Yoga would appear to Midwestern Americans as exotic as ash-covered Indian sādhus and yogis with long matted hair wandering down Main Street. Yet popular, or Haṭha, yoga is clearly visible.⁶ Haṭha

⁴ This 'Temple Hinduism' phenomenon—the recent establishing of Hindu temples across America by Hindu immigrant communities—is well described by Diana Eck in her book, *A New Religious America*, to which I have referred earlier in note 2.

⁵ In this essay I will use a capital 'Y' when referring to the classical Yoga philosophy of Patañjali outlined in the *Yogasūtra*. I will use the lower case when referring to yoga generally.

⁶ Haṭha yoga is a form of Indian yoga involving physical training of the body

yoga classes, emphasizing health and wellness, are offered throughout America and information about yoga is as close as one's local magazine stand, health center, high school, or college recreation program.⁷ Yoga has become mainstream American, but at a cost. Much of classical Yoga, and most of the religious aspects of Hinduism, has been filtered out. I suspect that even those people who practice yoga do not see it as a path to salvation, or as a religion. In its American form yoga has become largely a set of techniques to promote health and well being that can benefit people of any religion, or no religion.

and breath, and is based on several traditional texts: the *Hāṭhayogapradīpikā*, *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, and the *Śiva Saṃhitā*. For a thorough account of the traditional practice of this form of yoga see: Theos Bernard, *Hāṭha Yoga: The Report of a Personal Experience* (London: Rider & Company, 1950). The yoga postures (*āsana*-s) and breathing exercises as popularly practiced by most people in the U.S. are generally derived from Hāṭha yoga.

⁷ My own town in Wisconsin of about 11,000 inhabitants, Fort Atkinson, offers yoga and t'ai chi classes—along with other health classes on diet and exercise—through the local hospital, Fort Atkinson Memorial Health Services. The local super markets also carry the *Yoga Journal* magazine, and the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Coaching at UW-Whitewater offers both 'Beginning Yoga' and 'Intermediate Yoga.' Dr. Constance Kirk, the instructor for these UW-Whitewater courses, recently completed her yoga certificate training at the White Lotus Foundation in Santa Barbara, California, one of the leading yoga training centers in the U.S. It was started in Los Angeles in 1967 by Ganga White, Radha McGowan and a few close friends and relatives. The property in Santa Barbara was acquired around 1983, and the center there continues to offer regular yoga teacher training courses. Ganga White studied yoga in India, and was initially affiliated with the Sivananda Organization. Later he and the Foundation became associated with B.K.S. Iyengar, and attracted interest and support from famous celebrities such as Peter Sellers and Sting. Further information is available on their website: www.whitelotus.org. Dr. Kirk here at UW-Whitewater has her students keep a diary in which they reflect on their reading and notice changes in body awareness. She is using as her textbook for these classes the *KISS Guide to Yoga* by Shakti Kaur Khalsa, part of the *Keep it Simple Series* (London and New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2001). Interestingly, the author of this book is herself not an Indian, nor a Hindu, but a Westerner who has taken an Indian name, and is a follower of the Indian Sikh guru Yogi Bhajan, Siri Singh Sahib, who came to the U.S. in 1969 to teach 'Kundalini Yoga,' to train teachers, and to found his organization called the 3HO Foundation ('Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization'). In 1994 Yogi Bhajan founded the IKYTA, International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association, with centers in 22 countries. Sikhism is, of course, one of the World's major religions, with an estimated 23 million followers worldwide, and about 500,000 in the U.S. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001 some turban-wearing Sikhs in the U.S. have been the unfortunate targets of hate crimes, their assailants mistaking them for Muslims. The term 'Sikhism,' however, does not occur in the index of this popular yoga book, and my guess is that most students who use it have no knowledge of Sikhism, and are unaware of the author's connection with Sikhism or with Yogi Bhajan.

I recently gave an informal survey on attitudes toward yoga to about fifty-five students in two sections of my junior-level general humanities course called 'The World of Ideas.' I was prompted to do this by a casual comment made by a member of our weekly meditation group, a group sponsored by the student Philosophy Club here on campus. Her comment was that some people she knows consider all forms of meditation to be un-Christian and potentially harmful. In meditation one opens one's mind to the work of the devil. I was surprised, and wondered how widespread this perception might be. So I asked students in the survey to describe their understanding of Yoga, and indicate whether in their view yoga had become 'mainstream American,' or was it in some sense a 'foreign cult,' or perhaps something in between. I also asked them whether they thought it was potentially beneficial, or harmful. And I asked them whether they thought their immediate family and friends would have a similar attitude.

Only one student, who expressed a clear fundamentalist Christian commitment, considered yoga to be a foreign cult and dangerous, though she did not identify it as Hindu. Six stated that yoga was of foreign origin but, significantly, only one student out of the fifty-five correctly identified yoga as Hindu in origin. None of the other students described yoga as a religion. Most felt that yoga practice was either 'beneficial' or 'very beneficial.' About 14 students, or 25% of the students surveyed, considered yoga to be 'mainstream American,' and another seven, or 13%, thought it was rapidly becoming mainstream. Eight students, or 15%, felt it was *not* mainstream. Four other students described yoga as 'trendy' or a 'fad' or even as 'a joke.' Several students pointed out—correctly—that yoga appeals more to women than to men. This perception was corroborated in a major recent survey, according to which 76.9% of yoga practitioners are indeed women, only 23.1% men.

Here are some of the other findings from the national survey released in June, 2003, from 'the first comprehensive study of the yoga market,' a study commissioned by the *Yoga Journal* magazine, and conducted by the Harris Interactive Service Bureau. According to the survey, approximately 15 million Americans currently practice yoga, an increase of about 29% over the previous year. Another 35 million people expressed the intention to try yoga within the next 12 months, and an estimated half of the adult population of the U.S. expressed at least a casual interest in yoga practice. Here is

the data on the age distribution of yoga practitioners: 25% were 25–34 years of age, 16% 35–44, and 30% 45–54. Yoga practitioners are above average in income and education: over 30% of practitioners had an annual household income of \$75,000 or more, and nearly 50% of yoga practitioners had completed a college-level education or higher. In terms of the geographic distribution, 20% of yoga practitioners live on the West Coast, about 30% live in the Northeast, and another 30% live in the Midwest.⁸

This survey by the *Yoga Journal* confirms the general impression that Haṭha yoga is widely popular, and gaining acceptance as part of mainstream American life. This form of yoga stresses physical stretching exercises, or postures, various breathing exercises, diet, conscious relaxation, and meditation to promote health and well-being. Judging from popular yoga books and manuals, it appears that meditation is a part of popular yoga practice in America, but not the core practice as it is in classical Yoga.

What about classical Yoga then, its deeper meditation practice, and the conceptual, or philosophical, presuppositions supporting it? To what extent have Americans been attracted to the philosophical aspects of classical Yoga? Certainly not as much as Americans have been attracted to the practical benefits of the physical exercises, but I believe there are certain surprising affinities between aspects of American attitudes toward psychology and religion and the philosophical teachings of classical Hindu Yoga. There are, as I will argue, even stronger affinities with Vedānta philosophy. But let me turn next to the issue of psychology.

It has been argued that the Western psyche is different from the Indian and therefore it is not advisable for Americans and Europeans to practice the deeper meditative and philosophical aspects of classical Yoga.

I am referring here to the controversial viewpoint expressed years ago by Carl Gustav Jung in his well-known article on Yoga published in 1936 in *Prabuddha Bharata*, the main periodical of the

⁸ The leading bimonthly yoga magazine, *Yoga Journal*, has 300,000 paid subscribers and a readership of over 950,000. According to a survey collected for the *Yoga Journal* by Harris Interactive Service Bureau, over 7% of U.S. adults now practice yoga, or 15 million people, with nearly 30% of this total number in the central United States. (http://www.yogajournal.com/about_press.cfm 11/14/03).

Ramakrishna Order of India founded by Swāmi Vivekānanda. In this article Jung argued that the serious practice of Yoga is not suitable for Westerners. Jung's conclusion seems to have been influenced by a specific passage in the writing of Vivekānanda, who had earlier described religion in terms of the 'four yogas' (Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Rāja Yoga, and Jñāna Yoga) in a passage printed on the front piece to his *Rāja Yoga*. This is Vivekānanda's description of the essence of religion:

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.⁹

Note that Vivekānanda emphasized 'controlling nature, external and internal.' Jung did not cite this quotation directly, but probably had it in mind while writing the following in his 1936 article:

For the Indian, it comes as a blessing to know of a method which helps him to control the supreme power of nature within and without . . . As a European, I cannot wish the European more 'control' and more power over the nature within and around us . . . Western man has no need of more superiority over nature whether outside or inside. He has both in almost devilish perfection. What he lacks is conscious recognition of his inferiority to the nature around and within him.¹⁰

What Westerners do need, according to Jung, is a better understanding of themselves, of their own psyches, and of their own unconscious. Jung maintained that if Westerners attempt to practice Yoga seriously—even under the guidance of a qualified Indian guru—they

⁹ Swāmi Vivekānanda, *Rāja Yoga*. Reprinted in *The Complete Works of Swāmi Vivekānanda*. Mayavati Memorial Edition. 14th edition. Volume 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), 124. Vivekānanda's book on Rāja Yoga contains a translation of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, along with an introduction and extensive commentary. In his introduction Vivekānanda briefly describes Sāṃkhya philosophy and psychology on which classical Yoga practice is based.

¹⁰ C. G. Jung, "Yoga and the West," in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*. Vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 533–535.

will be in danger of gaining only part of the conscious control they seek, for they will be overwhelmed in the process by the unrecognized and unresolved contents welling up from their own unconscious. Whatever new powers they might gain from Yoga would only be misused as they fall prey to these unconscious and potentially destructive forces.

Part of the problem, as Jung saw it, is the split in Western culture, and the Western mind, between science and reason on the one side, and religion and the unconscious on the other. Westerners would not be truly able to comprehend Yoga in its depth. The Indian psyche, by contrast, did not experience this duality, this conflict, and could assimilate the profound philosophy and symbolism of yoga in its entirety.

This—historically inevitable—split in the Western mind also affected yoga so far as this had gained a footing in the West, and led to its being made an object of scientific study on the one hand, while on the other it was welcomed as a way of salvation.¹¹

Jung advised Westerners interested in spiritual growth to study Yoga, but not to practice it. Instead he believed Western seekers should turn to the meditative and contemplative disciplines of their own cultural and religious heritage: preeminently the practices of Catholic Christianity, such as the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola. Protestantism by contrast was ‘bankrupt’ in Jung’s view, and had nothing to offer to these seekers. Indeed Protestant Christianity with its emphasis on the individual’s salvation by grace through faith offered no recourse to those who lacked the necessary faith. There was no institutional grace, no sacraments, and no method for the individual to turn to; all that remained was theological dogma and individual despair. Yoga and other Eastern religious disciplines appealed especially to Protestants since they appeared to offer them methods for salvation—for spiritual growth—sadly lacking in their own tradition. Hence Jung saw the formation of yoga groups and other groups interested in Eastern spiritual traditions as largely a Protestant phenomenon.

More recent outside observers commenting on yoga groups in America have noted the Protestant characteristics of these organiza-

¹¹ Ibid., p. 531.

tions. I suspect the members of these groups are largely unconcerned about this external organizational Protestantism, and are much more focused on the psychological depth and subtlety of yoga teachings. Here I again refer to Jung who predicted that psychology will replace religion for many modern Westerners. The modern Westerner Jung characterized as ‘modern man in search of his soul.’¹² It is in psychology that some of these spiritual seekers hope to find the wholeness and understanding they feel is lacking in their own religious traditions. Recent studies of religion in America suggest that many American Christians when selecting a new church to attend are less concerned with doctrinal issues and organizational structure, and are more concerned with psychology issues as they seek guidance from their churches. Commenting on the surprising turnover of membership in Protestant churches and the attempts of new denominations to attract new members, a recent survey on religion in America noted:

Such churning [turnover of membership] limits doctrinal purism, which might otherwise be expected in a new church. Instead, churches try to attract floating believers—what Wade Clark Roof, a sociologist, calls ‘a generation of seekers.’ According to Mr. Wolfe [of the Boisi Institute of the Study of Religion at Boston College], American churches are therapeutic, not judgmental. They stress ‘soft’ qualities such as guidance and mutual help, not ‘hard’ ones like sin and damnation.¹³

From my reading of popular American magazines on yoga and spirituality generally, it appears to me that the philosophy of classical Yoga, with its unusual theology, and its ontology of atomistic, isolated ‘selves,’ has appealed to relatively few Americans. The Hindu conception of ‘self’ that has had much wider appeal is clearly that of Vedānta, in one of its several forms. I believe it is the deep psychological understanding of the self and the techniques for experiencing it that have fascinated Americans, more than other basic presuppositions of Hindu philosophy—such as rebirth, or the law of karma, or even liberation.

¹² This is the English title of C. G. Jung’s *Seelenprobleme der Gegenwart*. Carl Gustav Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1933).

¹³ ‘Therapy of the Masses,’ *The Economist*, in the Special Section ‘A Survey of America,’ volume 369, Number 8349, November 6, 2003, p. 16.

We Americans are clearly very concerned with the 'self.' Our popular psychology is full of it, but this American 'self' seems at first glance very different from the self envisioned by classical Yoga or Vedānta. The American 'self' is extraverted, the embodiment of action-oriented rugged individualism, and social pragmatism.¹⁴

There is, however, another aspect of this American self, more private and introverted. This side of the American self does indeed seem to have some affinity with classical Yoga, Vedānta, and with ancient Gnosticism. Evidence for this can be seen today in the public fascination with Gnosticism, such as in the popularity of the books of Elaine Pagels on the early Christian Gnostic gospels found at Nag Hammadi.¹⁵ Perhaps Gnosticism appeals more to Americans than classical Yoga because, as Jung would have predicted, it is part of our own cultural tradition, and the Gnostic gospels offer an alternative understanding of Christianity, and the relationship between human beings and the divine.

These two sides of the American self are in tension. The predominantly extraverted American self seeks social involvement, perhaps because it fears the potential isolation introversion reveals. Harold Bloom has described this spiritual ambivalence in a book that explicitly identifies Gnosticism as 'the American religion':

What the American self has found, since about 1800, is its own freedom—from the world, from time, from other selves. But this freedom

¹⁴ Consider, for example, the title of a recent book by one of the most influential psychologists in the American media and popular culture, 'Dr. Phil,' whose picture appeared on the September 2002 cover of *Newsweek* magazine. Phillip C. McGraw, *Self Matters: Creating Your Life from the Inside Out* (New York: Simon & Schuster Source, 2001). The pragmatic, extraverted side of American psychology can be seen in American psychologists from William James to William Glasser and Phillip McGraw. Glasser calls the theory behind his method of practice 'reality theory,' and more recently 'choice theory,' emphasizing how people choose their 'total behavior' in response to their environment and in their attempt to satisfy five basic needs (security; love and a sense of belonging; power; freedom; and fun). In effect people create their own emotional problems inadvertently by choosing self-defeating behavior while trying to fulfill their basic needs.

¹⁵ See, for example, Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003). In the autobiographical portions of this work the author confides her fascination with the Gospel of Thomas, and especially with this saying of Jesus contained in it: 'Jesus said: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you".' Gospel of Thomas 70, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Richard Robinson, general editor. 3rd edition. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

is a very expensive torso, because of what it is obliged to leave out: society, temporality, the other. What remains, for it, is solitude and the abyss.¹⁶

In terms of classical Yoga, the freedom Bloom describes is obviously not ‘the abyss’ in the sense of ‘hell,’ with all the negative emotional overtones this word connotes. Nor is this freedom a given, as Bloom implies in this passage, but it has to be earned through intense meditation and other spiritual disciplines. Like the Gnostic American self Bloom describes, the ‘self’ of classical Indian Yoga philosophy is indeed an isolated self (*puruṣa*), inactive, socially uninvolved. But Indian yogis—as well as their Jain cousins—have seen this isolation (*kaivalya*) as an ultimate condition of blessed perfection. Salvation is understood as individual pure consciousness eternally separate from all other selves and from matter.

The ‘self’ that has occupied the attention of so much popular religion and culture in America is not the ‘soul’ of traditional Christianity according to Bloom. He argues persuasively that there has been a persistent strain of Gnosticism running through American religion since about 1800. By ‘Gnosticism’ Bloom means the belief in a ‘self’ that is co-existent with God in the beginning, that is a ‘spark’ of the divine. Along with this belief in the divine spark dwelling within each person, is what Bloom calls American Orphism: the belief that this indwelling divinity can be *experienced*. Bloom traces the threads of these beliefs interwoven into American Christianity back to the religious ‘Enthusiasm’ of 17th century England and groups such as the Quakers. Then African American Christianity and the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening at Cane Ridge, Kentucky reinforced

¹⁶ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 37. Harold Bloom has argued that the true ‘American religion’ is a form of Gnosticism: the belief that the soul is co-eternal with God, and is in some way divine. American optimism has its spiritual antecedents in ancient orphism, and its historical antecedents in the European Enthusiasm of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In contrast to the early American Puritanism, this Gnostic strain in American religious belief does not really believe in original sin, or in the full creatureliness of human nature. Bloom sees evidence of this orphism, Gnosticism, and enthusiasm in American revival movements from Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1820, to contemporary preachers such as Billy Graham. He sees it in Transcendentalism, Mormonism, Christian Science, Pentecostalism and Californian New Age movements. He even sees Gnosticism in modern pronouncements of the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention.

these beliefs. Mormonism likewise has clearly Gnostic elements, as did Emerson's transcendentalism. In the 20th century Pentecostalism and the Southern Baptists both exhibit beliefs and practices Bloom identifies as part of this multifaceted American Gnosticism.

If Bloom's general thesis is correct, that American religion has to do with *experience* of the divine self within, then this thesis accounts for recent scholarly and popular interest in ancient Christian forms of Gnosticism expressed in the texts found at Nag Hammadi. This interest is genuine, and it is religious. In addition to Gnosticism this thesis accounts for the widespread, enduring interest among Americans of both Christian and Jewish descent in various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, Vedānta . . . and yoga.

Again judging from popular literature on yoga, I believe it is not this separate self, this isolated pure consciousness of classical Yoga, that has appealed to Americans, but rather the universal 'Self' (*ātman*) of Vedānta, the Vedāntic 'Self' at one with absolute reality (Brahman). This American preference for the Vedāntic understanding of the 'Self' can be seen in most popular yoga books, which define yoga in terms of 'union with God.' This union with God makes perfect sense in Vedānta, but not in terms of classical yoga. I am not sure that Bloom has correctly described the freedom of the Gnostic American self. It seems to me that the Gnostic self, like the Vedāntic self, is not isolated, but a part, or spark, of the divine. If the divine is within, does this mean that the world is devalued? In the case of classical Yoga, and some forms of Gnosticism, I think the answer is yes; and this devaluation of the world is unlikely to appeal to pragmatic Americans.

The pragmatic activism of Americans, and American religion, may offer further clues to the American preference for the self of Vedānta, and Christian Gnosticism, rather than for the self of classical Yoga. If one considers how these two different Indian conceptions of the self might actually be applied in life, two famous exemplars of classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta come to mind: Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya and Swāmi Vivekānanda.

Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya was one of the main modern exponents of classical Yoga and served as the head of the Kāpil Monastery in Jharkhand state, India. He was a respected scholar of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, as well as an advanced Yoga practitioner, and is well known to specialists in Indology through the English translation of his Bengali

translation and commentary on the *Yogasūtra*.¹⁷ What is most striking about his life, however, is that he voluntarily spent his last twenty-one years walled up in a small cave-like cell, with only a small window left open through which food was passed. This life-style, this voluntary physical isolation of Swāmi Hariharānanda, perfectly reflects the ideal of salvation in Classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy: the complete spiritual isolation of the self.

Swāmi Vivekānanda, one of the most famous modern exponents of Neo-Vedānta, by contrast spent the last part of his short life traveling around the world lecturing and founding a philanthropic monastic order, the Ramakrishna Order of India, based on the motto: 'For one's own salvation and the welfare of the world.' The life of Swāmi Vivekānanda and the social service initiated by him and his brother Vedānta monks reflects the ideal of an engaged, or what he called 'practical,' Vedānta. Following the inspiration of Sri Rāmakrishna, Vivekānanda and his brother monks sought 'to serve God in man,' i.e., to serve humanity as a manifestation of God in the world. The world is not devalued, but seen as ultimately a manifestation of the divine. There is little doubt which philosophy and which life-style most Americans—certainly the students in my university classes!—would find more understandable, attractive and inspiring.

Another problem facing the American appropriation of classical Yoga is its theology. The god (*īśvara*, or 'lord') of classical yoga is understood as an eternally liberated soul and the first teacher of yoga. This rather limited concept of god conflicts with the Judeo-Christian understanding of God as the Creator of the universe.

As in Buddhism and Vedānta, there is no concept of sin in classical Yoga equivalent to Christianity. There is rather an emphasis on ignorance and wrong actions as the cause of suffering and of the

¹⁷ *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali. With the commentary of Vyāsa and a translation with annotations by Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya*. English translation by P. N. Mukerji (Originally published by Calcutta University Press in 1963; US edition: Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983). In the preface to the first edition the translator P. N. Mukerji wrote: 'His [Swāmi Hariharānanda's] last years were spent at Madhupur in Bihar where he lived the life of a hermit in a dwelling containing a built-up cave. The only means of contact at that time between him and his disciples was through a window opening on a big hall. He spent the last twenty-one years of his life in that solitary sequestered residence where he left his mortal abode.'

rebirth that results. Of course the absence of this Christian concept of sin in Hindu thought generally is what some Americans find most attractive. In classical Yoga there is no teaching of sin as an offense against a personal God. As there is no sin, there is no need for divine forgiveness and justification. In classical Yoga salvation is through personal effort, not divine grace.

According to Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, the wise see all worldly human existence as suffering, caused by the identification of pure spirit (*puruṣa*) with the mind and body. The yogi's solution is to stop this false identification of the true self, the pure spirit or witness, with the not-self. This is done, in Jungian terms, by sustained introversion, or in yogic terms by *śamya*, techniques of concentration to suspend the normal flow of mental events (*cittavṛtti*). When the pure spirit, or witness, or 'see-er,' (*draṣṭṛ*) realizes its true nature it attains liberation, or what is technically called *kaivalya*, spiritual 'isolation.' Yoga philosophy is thus dualistic: matter and pure spirit are both eternal and both are ultimately real. Yoga also posits that pure spirit is itself multiple: there are multiple souls, or spirits (*puruṣa*-s).

In this respect, of course, classical Yoga is different from the spiritual monism of Advaita Vedānta, which posits the existence of only one ultimate reality, Brahman, the one eternal, ultimate Self (*ātman*) of all beings, the one Reality behind the appearance of the world and multiple souls. God is central to Christianity and the source of the soul's salvation. In Classical Yoga by contrast god, or *īśvara*, plays an important but secondary role as the first teacher, and as an exemplar of liberation. In Advaita Vedānta, God, or Brahman, is all that exists, and the realization of this truth is salvation.

If one understands religion in terms of Christianity, and in terms of the three Abrahamic religions generally, then the core of religion has to do with a personal relationship with a personal God. Christianity has to do with loving God and following God's will. I think most Americans understand religion precisely in these terms. Classical Yoga simply is not a religion in this sense. Vedānta fairs better in this regard, for Vedānta philosophy accepts the existence of God as creator in its aspect as *saṁyā Brahman* (a personal God with qualities). This is perhaps another reason why most popular writings on yoga interpret it in terms of the Vedāntic understanding of self and God, rather than the understanding of classical Yoga.

In conclusion, what has appealed most to pragmatic Americans, of course, is the physical side of yoga practice: the postures, diet,

and breathing exercises that promise health benefits, relaxation, and fitness.¹⁸ For most people yoga is not a religion, but a set of techniques to enhance health and well-being. But the adoption of yoga into American culture has been more complex than simply the adoption of new forms of exercise. Yoga has resonated with psychological and philosophical tendencies already present in American culture from as early as 1800 and manifested in such religious movements as the Second Great Awakening, Transcendentalism, Mormonism, Christian Science, and Vedānta. Yoga has from the time of its introduction appealed to Americans on many levels: philosophical, spiritual, psychological, and physical. This complex process of cultural adaptation reveals something about the rich complexity and spiritual depth of the Hindu yoga tradition, and also—perhaps surprisingly—of American culture.

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¹⁸ Consider the popularity of the *Yoga Journal* mentioned in an earlier note, which is self-described as a 'health and fitness' magazine. Dayna Macy in a recent press release pointed out that *Yoga Journal* was recently named by folio Magazine the Best Health and Fitness magazine in the United States for two consecutive years. It is also the top-selling health and fitness title at Barnes & Noble nationwide, as well as at Whole Foods. (<http://www.yogajournal.com/about.press.cfm> accessed 11/14/03).

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INDIAN TRADITIONS OF PHYSIOGNOMY: PRELIMINARY REMARKS¹

Kenneth G. Zysk

Abstract

This paper examines the history, practice, and principles of human physiognomy in India with a focus on its Sanskrit literature. Particular to the upper castes, the brahminic tradition of physiognomy or Sāmudrikaśāstra was used at least until the eighteen century to determine male succession and in the selection of partners in arranged marriages. In examining the history of physiognomic literature, this paper postulates that the system of fortune-telling by the body was a folk art originally preserved in different versions in *anuṣṭubh*-metre in five Mahāpurāṇas, and by a process of legitimisation through Hindu mythology and reformulation in different Sanskrit metres, the various forms of physiognomy became condensed and systematised into the brahminic science known as Sāmudrikaśāstra.

¹ Although my paper does not fit precisely into the theme of this commemoration volume for Gerald Larson, I am confident that Gerry would appreciate a contribution from the wider field of Indology. Unlike many of the other contributors, I was not a doctoral student of Gerald Larson. In fact, he was my M.A. supervisor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where I completed a master's degree in Asian Studies, with an emphasis on Indology in 1976. When I arrived at UCSB in the autumn of 1974, Gerry was quite new to the West Coast, having spent some years in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee. UCSB needed a dynamic new leader for its relatively new Department of Religious Studies, and Gerald Larson was just the man for the job. He and I hit it off from the start. I was eager to learn Sanskrit and Indology, and he was eager to teach me. We were a small group of Sanskrit students at the time. Several of my fellow students have gone on to distinguished careers in Religious Studies, and I am pleased to see that some of them are also contributors to this volume. For me, Religious Studies is an exciting and interesting discipline that gives place to creative and innovative thinking, sometimes, but not always, at the expense of solid philological scholarship. Gerry is an honest scholar, who recognises the flaws of Religious Studies and insists on maintaining a high level of philological rigour in his scholarship, his language teaching and his guidance of students. His scholarship in the field of Sāṃkhya and the Indian philosophical traditions reflects his commitment to Indology.

In those early days, I was privileged to have Gerry as a teacher. He took me under his wing, so to speak, and patiently showed me what I needed to know, while at the same time igniting the passion for ancient Indian history and culture. I went on to follow the path of Indology, but in all of my work, there is always

Introduction

It is a fundamental desire of all human beings to know what lies ahead in their lives. Techniques for obtaining this information are as old as humankind. Today, most of us in the West are content to glance at our horoscopes in the morning newspaper, as we gobble down our breakfasts and we gulp down our last cup of coffee. However, there are others, who are more serious about knowing the future. Some of them even resort to astrologers or psychics, who profess to have knowledge or powers to see things in their clients' future lives based on the movement of planets or on special gifts that they possess. Others take recourse to fortune-tellers, skilled in the art of reading the lines on the palms of the hands or the meanings of the figures on Tarot cards. Practitioners of these special skills are often associated with the group of nomads known as the Gypsies or Romany. The palmistry or chiromancy, which they use, has its roots in the art of fortune telling by the body, commonly called physiognomy. In general, physiognomy is the art of reading the morphology and characteristics of, and marks on, the human body. The purpose may vary from one culture to the next; but understanding the past as a means for knowing the future always stands in the background. Evidence of this practice can be sought in most civilisations of antiquity from the Hellenistic world to East Asia. It was even utilized in pre-modern Europe, where it became part of medicine. Moreover, there are clear indications that the Gypsies were principal sources of physiognomy in Europe from the fifteenth century. In the Tibetan tradition, physiognomy has played a crucial role in determining the succession of spiritual leaders up to and including the Dalai Lamas.

Much has been written about physiognomy in most of the world's major civilisations, but very little attention has been paid to its manifestation in India.² In this paper, therefore, I should like to try to

a faint echo of Gerry Larson, for he was my first mentor, and for that I am very grateful. The following contribution is but a small token of my appreciation for his friendship, support and encouragement over the years.

² See William A. Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination* (Los Angeles: United World, 1969); Martin Porter, "English (Treatises on Physiognomy), c. 1500–c. 1780." D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, England, 1997; and his forthcoming monograph *The Art of Physiognomy in Early Modern Europe* (tentative title). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

begin to unravel the story of Indian physiognomy by giving a brief account of its development and literary history. This will be followed by examples from physiognomic literature, which illustrate a possible mode of literary assimilation in ancient India. In addition, the example of fortune telling by women's toes provides a glimpse at Indian physiognomy's ideological basis. Finally, since this is an early study, I shall conclude with some suggestions for further studies of Indian physiognomy.

Physiognomy in the Purāṇas

An independent textbook or *śāstra* devoted to physiognomy did not appear in India until about the twelfth century C.E., when Durlabharāja and his son, Jagaddeva, composed the *Sāmudrikatilaka*. The title of this text derives from the name of the semi-mythical Samudra, whom the tradition of the learned Brahmins regarded as the first author of Indian physiognomy. Prior to this time, evidence of physiognomy came in the form of individual, circumscribed chapters in the early astrological compilations of Jyotiḥśāstra and in several major collections of old stories, known as Purāṇas.

The physiognomy presented in these sources of brahmanic writing was codified in two separate collections of verses: the physiognomy of men (*puruṣalakṣaṇa*) and the physiognomy of women (*strīlakṣaṇa*). There were different methods by which the examination and prognostication took place, but two techniques predominated. The first involved a type of numerology of the man's body parts. Evidence indicates that there were several different systems of numerological physiognomy in ancient India, but at some point in time, the number of the male's relevant body parts was established at thirty-two.

The second technique offered predictions about a man's and a woman's future, based on a detailed examination of their body parts, including the designs on the soles of the feet and the lines on the palms of the hands and sometimes the lines on the forehead and on the neck. The investigation began on the woman's left side and the man's right side, and systematically moved up the body, beginning with the feet and ending with the hair on the head. In addition to the gross anatomy, more subtle human characteristics also received attention, for they told about the state of a person's past life and were indicators of the condition and duration of a person's current

life. These included, among others, the body's lustre or sheen, the direction in which the body hairs curled, the voice, the body's smell, and the person's walk and general demeanour.

Internal evidence indicates that the privileged castes, most notably the princely Kṣatriyas, were the principal users of physiognomy in ancient and mediaeval India. It held a major place in the brahminic social and political systems for it served two purposes: one focused on the man in the establishment of his right of succession and his suitability as a spouse; and the other concentrated on the woman as a partner in arranged marriages. It was used to determine a man's future prosperity and fitness to be a leader and head of the household and a woman's fertility and suitability as a wife and a mother. It is for these reasons that the codified collections of verses on the human physiognomy subsequently found their way into certain collections of Indian law and customs, called the *Smṛtinibandhas*, and into textbooks of lawful conjugal love, known as the *Ratīśāstras*.

Perhaps the earliest examples of the art of physiognomy are contained in the *Purāṇas*. Traditionally numbering eighteen, most authorities consider these Sanskrit texts to be dateless compilations of religious and folk lore, assembled from the perspective of a major sect of Hinduism.³ Of the eighteen, five *Purāṇas* contain chapters on human physiognomy: the *Agnipurāṇa*, the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, the *Garuḍapurāṇa*, the Kāśīkhaṇḍa of the *Skandapurāṇa*, and the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*. These five *Purāṇas* give a fairly accurate picture of the different traditional transmissions of physiognomic knowledge in ancient India. The Śaiva-version found in the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, is particularly interesting, because it tells about physiognomy's mythical origins as well as its practitioners and their method.

The Hindu god Śiva was the divine source of physiognomy. At a certain time, it was lost in the great sea of salt, from where, the god Kṛṣṇa retrieved it and passed it on to Samudra who, according to tradition, was the first to compose verses on the subject. In terms of Indian literary history, the establishment of physiognomy's divine origin and its transmission to humans were the necessary first steps in the process of turning a body of common knowledge into

³ See Rocher, Ludo. *The Purāṇas. A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. 2.3 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986).

a learned science (*śāstra*). Thus, in this purely academic way, the priests and privileged classes would not become defiled when they came in contact with practitioners of the art of physiognomy.

The method of physiognomic examination of a woman's body is explicitly mentioned in this Purāṇa:

According to the teaching of Samudra, in addition to her two bodily spheres [i.e., lower and upper parts of the body], one should inspect her mother and father, her brother, and her maternal uncle.

At the time of the approved constellation, connected with the lunar day and at the right moment, a man learned in the science [of physiognomy], accompanied by Brahmins, should inspect the young girl. He should inspect both hands and both feet, the fingers, the toes, the nails, the lines on the hands, the two shanks, the buttocks, the navel, and the thigh, . . . as well as the hair on the head, the line of hair on the abdomen, the voice, the complexion, and moreover, the curling of the body hairs. . . .⁴

These verses find close variants in the chapter of a girl's physiognomy (*kanyālakṣaṇa*) in the Buddhist's *Śārdūlakamaṇāvadāna* (Śkā). In addition to the routine process of examination beginning with the feet, we notice several important characteristics of this form of Indian physiognomy. First, not only the prospective bride, but also her parents, her brother, and her maternal uncle were subjected to physiognomic investigation. Secondly, priests accompanied the fortune-teller. This seems especially important because it indicates that the fortune-teller might well have not been a member of the higher and purer social orders, since the presence of Brahmins was required presumably to provide the appropriate ritually pure setting for the physiognomic investigation. It is perhaps because these practitioners were considered to be impure that, according to the *Dīghanikāya* of the Pāli Canon, fortune-telling, among others, by the marks on the body

⁴ BhvP 1.28:

mātaraṃ pitaraṃ caiva bhrātaraṃ mātulaṃ tathā/
dvau tu bimbau parīkṣeta samudrasya vaco yathā// 3
muhūrte tithisaṃpanne nakṣatre cābhipūjite/
dvijais tu saha vāgamyā kanyūṃ vīkṣeta śāstravid// 4
hastau pādau parīkṣeta aṃgulīr nakham eva ca/
pāṇīm eva ca jaṃghe . . .// 5
var (i.pā.): pāṇirekhā (cf. Śkā).
. . . śiraḥ keśāṃs tathaiva ca/
romarājikaṃ svaram varṇam āvartāni tu vā punaḥ// 7
var (i.pā.): romarājīs tathā madhyāvartāni

(*lakṣaṇa*) was considered to be a low art, and a livelihood inappropriate for ascetics and Brahmins (*samaṇabrāhmaṇa*).⁵

The fortune-tellers, therefore, seem not to have been among the learned priests who could read and understand Samudra's verses; but rather they appear to have been men who had first-hand experience with the techniques of reading the bodily signs and the meanings that they revealed. In arranged marriages, especially among the higher orders of Hindu society, emphasis was placed on the female partner, for she had the primary responsibility for providing her husband with a strong and intelligent son who would carry on the family line. Leaving no stone unturned, the expert in physiognomy was called in to read the girl, her parents, her brother, and her maternal uncle in the normal manner from toe-to-head. If all the signs were found to be auspicious, she was deemed to be acceptable.

Purāṇic literature, therefore, could well have been the means by which the different systems of physiognomy gained a foothold, as it were, in brahminic literature. It was a significant step on the way of converting a system of useful knowledge into a brahminic science or śāstra.

Physiognomy in Jyotiḥśāstra

In the sixth century of the Common Era, another step was taken in the process of making physiognomy a Hindu science with its inclusion in specific collections of the Hindu system of knowledge called Jyotiḥśāstra, 'the science of the stars,' to which physiognomic literature is traditionally attached.

Physiognomy was codified in the section on omens (*saṃhita*) in the different Jyotiḥśāstra compilations. A part of the omen literature, discussing the characteristics of young unmarried girls (*kanyālakṣaṇa*), occurs in the *Gargasamhitā* (chapter 48), which most authorities date between the first century B.C. to the first century A.D. Six centuries after Varāhamihira composed chapters on the physiognomy of both men and women in his *Brhatsamhitā*.⁶

⁵ The *Brahmajālasuttanta* of *Dīghanikāya*, where there is also mentioned *aṅgam* (palmistry), *nimittam* (omens), and *supinam* (dream interpretation) [DN 1.1.21 (1,9)].

⁶ See David Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra. Astral and Mathematical Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto

The evidence from the chapters in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* indicates that a consolidation of physiognomic knowledge in Jyotiḥśāstra probably began in the period of the Gupta dynasties (fourth to seventh century A.D.), when Varāhamihira, probably with access to the same physiognomic material that has been preserved in the Purāṇas, composed his chapters on physiognomy in his encyclopaedic work. Chapter 67 (68), containing 113 verses in different metres, is devoted to the physiognomy of men (*puruṣalakṣaṇa*), while chapter 69 (70) with twenty-six verses in various metres, deals with the physiognomy of girls (*kanyālakṣaṇa*). The intervening chapter 68 (69), entitled the physiognomy of the five great men (*pañcamahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) has forty verses that detail the characteristics of five types of men based on plants Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Mercury and Venus. This form of physiognomy bears no relationship to that found in the Purāṇas and probably represents an entirely different tradition of physiognomy.

The final step in making physiognomy a Hindu science took place in the last half of the 12th century, when Durlabharāja and his son, Jagaddeva, completed their independent treatise on physiognomy, the *Sāmudrikatilaka* in 800 verses of āryā-metre.⁷

The earliest datable manuscript of this work is an incomplete text, whose copy was made in *saṃvat* 1632 (A.D. 1575), and the earliest datable manuscript of the complete text was composed *saṃvat* 1744 (A.D. 1687). Although a complete analysis is required, comparisons with the text-passages cited in several descriptive catalogues of manuscripts indicate that the printed edition, originally from Bombay and reprinted several times, represents the standard version of the text.⁸

The work follows a well-established traditional method for the legitimisation of knowledge in a brahminical context. The opening verses tell how Samudra composed the textbook on human physiognomy

Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 76; Zysk, *Conjugal Love in India* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), p. 14. The section of physiognomy in the *Gargasamhitā* is preserved only in manuscript and has not been examined for this paper. The section on male physiognomy is apparently wanting.

⁷ David Pingree, *Jyotiḥśāstra*, pp. 76–78; Zysk, *Conjugal Love*, p. 14.

⁸ The printed editions of the *Sāmudrikatilaka* include: Rādhākṛṣṇa Miśra, ed. with Hindī ṭīkā, *Sāmudrikāśāstra* (Bombay: Śrī Venkateśvara Sṭim Press, 1956, reprint Bombay: Khemarāj Śrīkṛṣṇadās prakāśan, 1995); and Śukadeva Caturvedī, ed. with Hindī ṭīkā, *Sāmudrikāśāstra* (Vārāṇasī: Prācyā Prakāśana, 1996). The manuscripts occur in the following: AS Bombay. vol. 1: ms. 40 (*saṃvat* 1744, A.D. 1687), p. 133; and RORI, pt. 12: ms. 2781/580 (*śrīlakṣaṇa*, *saṃvat* 1632, A.D. 1575).

(*nṛstrīlakṣaṇaśāstra*), after he reflected on the importance of physiognomy in the relationship between Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī, and by extension its usefulness to all humans in this world.

The text goes on to explain that other ancient authors composed works on human physiognomy, but that the science was eventually split up into different parts because it became too large and too difficult to understand. It is then revealed that the principal aim of Durlabharāja and Jagaddeva was to reconnect the different parts of Samudra's science of physiognomy in one work. In this way, the *Naralakṣaṇaśāstra* or *Sāmudrikatilaka* has been regarded as the first independent text that established the brahminical scholastic tradition of *Sāmudrikaśāstra*.

The treatise is divided into five chapters: the first three chapters deal with men and the last two with women. The system of physiognomy starts with the examination of both the man's and the woman's bodies. It begins with the feet and ends with head, and includes the inspection of the lines on the palms and the soles. The man's physiognomy includes a form of numerological physiognomy of thirty-two body parts. The aim of this form of examination is the determination of a woman's suitability as a childbearing wife for a master of higher social rank and the man's longevity and future wealth and prosperity.

The process of fortune-telling involved not only a detailed examination of the marks on body, but also the inspection of another eight characteristics. These more subtle characteristics derived from the method used to examine a horse and included the following: curling of the body hairs (*āvarta*), the gait (*gati*), the skin's natural lustre (*chāyā*), the voice (*svara*), the complexion (*varṇa*), the bodily smell (*gandha*), and the body's innate state of being or the person's general demeanour (*sattva*).

From that point forward, human physiognomy was widely accepted as a legitimate Hindu science and formed part of the popular late mediaeval *Smṛtinibandhas*, and the texts of *Ratīśāstra*.

Physiognomy in Smṛtinibandhas and Ratīśāstra

As has been seen in the *Purāṇas* and in *Jyotiśāstra*, physiognomy was an integral part of Hindu law and custom because it was a necessary component in the process of arranged marriages. It is for this

reason that sections on human physiognomy (*strīpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) were incorporated into the late mediaeval compilations of brahminic law and customs, known as the *Smṛtinibandhas* and in the texts of *Ratīśāstra* or lawful conjugal love. Of the former, the *Lakṣaṇaprakāśa* section of Mitra Miśra's 18th century *Viṛamitrodaya* is paramount in importance because, by its collection and systematisation of all the authoritative teachings on human physiognomy, it represented the state of knowledge on the subject at that time.⁹ Physiognomy in *Ratīśāstra* is best seen in Siddhanāgārjuna's post-16th century *Ratīramaṇa*, which combined human physiognomy with modes of classifying men and women that derived from the textbooks of *Kāmaśāstra* and perhaps also partly from Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*.¹⁰

The story of the transmission of physiognomic knowledge in ancient and mediaeval India appears to reveal a familiar theme in Indian literary history: the transformation of a body of common knowledge into a science by the use of a Hindu veneer that gives it a divine origin. The same process has been observed in the case of the Hindu medical science of *Āyurveda* and probably applies to other *śāstras* as well.¹¹

More interesting, however, is an investigation into the actual origin of human physiognomy in India because it could offer an opportunity to observe the process of assimilation of knowledge into the Hindu intellectual milieu. The different traditions of physiognomy preserved in purāṇic literature points to folklore as the real source of Indian physiognomy. An on-going process of incorporation and recasting of this folkloric knowledge could well have transformed the extra-brahmanic art of fortune telling by the body into a legitimate brahmanic science. It is rare that timeless wisdom, transmitted by word of mouth, is preserved for posterity. The Sanskrit literature of the Hindu priests was one of the few antique literary traditions that seems to have recorded this information. Let us now turn to a couple of examples of human physiognomy, where we can witness how the process of transmission might have taken place.

⁹ Viṣṇu Prasāda Śarma, ed. *Viṛamitrodaya. Lakṣaṇaprakāśaḥ. Mahāmahopādhyāyāś-rīmitramiśraviracitaḥ*. Vol. 20.1-2 (Banaras: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Book Depot. 1914 [The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Nos. 196, 197]).

¹⁰ See Zysk, *Conjugal Love*, pp. 11-14, 144-55, and 192-206.

¹¹ See K. G. Zysk, *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India. Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), p. 4.

An example of physiognomy: numerology of man's body

A form of numerology involving the man's body is very old in India. It is mentioned in the *Vālmīkīrāmāyaṇa*,¹² and occurs as a distinct type of physiognomy, among others, in the various Purāṇas, the *Gargasamhitā* (from Utpala's commentary to the *Bṛhatsamhitā*), the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, and the *Sāmudrikatilaka*. This example shows how each author/compiler could have used the same material and transmitted it in a different metre, beginning with the *anuṣṭubh*-metre of the Purāṇas.

Purāṇa I

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (BhvP), 1.27, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

trīṇi yasya mahābāho vipulāni narasya tu/
unnatāni tathā ṣaḍ vai gambhīrāṇi ca trīṇi vai// 3
catvāri cāpi hrasvāni sapta raktāni vā vibho/
dīrghāṇi cāpi sūkṣmāṇi bhavanti yasya pañca vā// 4

Of which man, O great-armed one, three are broad, six are elevated, three are deep, four are short, seven are red, O lord, five are long, or of whom, five are fine, [he is a king].

Purāṇa II

Skanda Purāṇa Kāśīkhaṇḍa (SPK) 11.58, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

pañcasūkṣmaḥ pañcadīrghaḥ saptaraktaḥ ṣaḍunnataḥ/
tripṛthur laghugambhīro dvītriṃśallakṣaṇas tv iti//

[They say] that [he is one] who has precisely the thirty-two physiognomic characteristics: he has five fine, five long, seven red, six elevated, three wide, three small, and three deep.

Jyotiḥśāstra I

Garga from Utpala to Bṛhatsamhitā 68 (67).88, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

pañcadīrghaś caturhrasvaḥ pañcasūkṣmaḥ ṣaḍunnataḥ/
pañcaraktas trivistīrṇas trigambhīraḥ praśasyate//

¹² In the *Vālmīkīrāmāyaṇa* a form of physiognomy that employs a numerology is applied to Rāma in an effort to distinguish him from his brother Lakṣmaṇa. The description occurs in the thirty-third chapter of the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, verses 17–19 in the Critical Edition.

[A man] is praised, who has five long, four short, five fine, six elevated, five red, three wide/broad, and three deep.

Jyotiḥśāstra II

Bṛhatsaṃhitā (BS) 68 (67) 84, metre: *āryā*

triṣu vipulo gambhīras triṣv eva ṣaḍunnataś caturhrasvaḥ/
saptasu rakto rājā pañcasu dīrghaḥ ca sūkṣmaś ca//

A king is broad in three, deep in three, has six elevated, four short, is red in seven, and both long and fine in five.

Sāmudrikaśāstra

Sāmudrikatilaka (ST) 2.88, metre: *āryā*

iha bhavati saptaraktaḥ ṣaḍunnataḥ pañcasūkṣmadīrgho yaḥ/
trivipulalaghugambhīro dvītriṃśallakṣaṇaḥ sa pumān//

In this world, he, who has seven red, six elevated, five fine, five long, three broad, three short, and three deep, is a man with thirty-two marks.

For purposes of analysis, the numbers and types from the different versions are represented in graphic form.¹³

	Broad	Elevated	Deep	Short	Red	Long	Fine	Total
BhvP	3	6	3	4	7	5	5	33
SPK	3	6	3	3	7	5	5	32
Garga	3	6	3	4	5	5	5	31
BS	3	6	3	4	7	5	5	33
ST	3	6	3	3	7	5	5	32

¹³ With minor variations, the numbers and types refer to the following: the mouth, the forehead, and the chest are broad; the nape of the neck, the mouth, the nails, the bosom, the nose, and the two armpits are elevated; the navel, the character, and the voice are deep; the penis, the neck, the shank, and the back are short; the outer edges of the eyes, the hands, the feet, the palate, the lower lip, the tongue, and the fingernails; the jaws, the eyes, the arms, the nose, and the space between the two breasts are long; and the teeth, the lines around the joints of the fingers, the hair on the head, the skin, and the fingernails are fine.

The categories from broad to fine are seven in each version; however, the total number of parts varies: The BhvP and BS each have 33, Garga, 31, and SPK and ST each have 32. It is clear that pairs BhvP and BS, and SPK and ST, each rely on a similar tradition because their numbers correspond; but they all probably do not derive from a common tradition. Differences are found in Garga, SPK, and ST, and in the categories short and red, where Garga has 5 instead of 7 red, and SPK and ST have 3 instead of 4 short. Based on these variations, it would appear that the standard number should be 33, as found in BhvP and BS, rather than 32, which is the number found in SPK and ST and accepted by the later tradition. The number 33 fits better the Hindu numerology, since it is an auspicious number, being the total number of Vedic gods, calculated as eleven in each of the three worlds (heaven, mid-space, and earth).

An Example of Physiognomy: The Women's Hands and Feet

According to the textbooks of physiognomy, the ideal female feet are smooth and arched with copper-coloured toenails. Both ankle-joints are the same, raised but lovely and hidden; the toes are close together and even; and the soles are smooth like lotus-blossoms. A man who marries such a woman would become a king and his wife a queen. Similarly, a king's wife, who enjoys longevity, should have various auspicious marks on the soles of her feet. These include, among others, the outline of a fish, a hook, a lotus, a plough, a wheel, a conch shell, and a svastika.¹⁴

By contrast, the feet of an inauspicious woman was misshapen and often had irregular toes, which were noticeable when she walked. Since fortune telling by means of women's toes formed a special part of Indian physiognomy, it, therefore, illustrates several unique features of the science in India. A brief look at it in the three textual traditions of the Purāṇas, Jyotiḥśāstra, and Sāṃudrikaśāstra provides insights into Indian physiognomy from two perspectives: its literary history and its ideological basis.

¹⁴ See Zysk, *Conjugal Love*, 145–46, and 194.

Purāṇas I

Garuḍapurāṇa, 65.104, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

kaniṣṭhikānāmikā vā yasyā na spr̥ṣate mahīm/
aṅguṣṭham vā gatātīya tarjanī kulaṭā ca sā//

She is a slut whose little toe or ring toe does not touch the ground, or whose index toe has gone, extending beyond the big toe [when she walks].

Jyotiḥśāstra

Brhatsaṃhitā, 69(70).16, metre: *triṣṭubh*, *upendravajrā*

kaniṣṭhikā vā tadanantarā vā
mahīm na yasyāḥ spr̥ṣati striyāḥ syāt/
gatāthavāṅguṣṭham atīya yasyāḥ
pradeśinī sā kulaṭātipāpā //

She, whose little toe or the one next to it does not touch the ground, or else whose index toe exceeds the big toe when she walks, is a very wicked slut.

Purāṇas II

Skandapurāṇa, Kāśīkhaṇḍa, 37.19cd–22, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

yasyāḥ kaniṣṭhikā bhūmiṃ na gacchantiyā parispr̥ṣet// 19cd
sā nihatya patim yoṣā dvitīyaṃ kurute patim/ 20ab

The woman, whose little toe does not touch the ground when she walks, after having killed her master, takes on a second master.

anāmikā ca madhyā ca yasyā bhūmiṃ na saṃspr̥ṣet// 20cd
patidvayaṃ nihanty ādyā dvitīyā ca patitrayam/
patihīnatvakāriṇyau hīne te dve ime yadi// 21

There is she, whose ring toe and middle toe do not touch the ground [when she walks]. The first [i.e., ring toe] kills her first and second masters, and the second [i.e., middle toe], her first, second, and third masters. If both of them are missing, they lead her to the state of being without a master.

pradeśinī bhaved yasyā *aṅguṣṭhād atirekiṇī*/ var: aṅguṣṭhāvyatirekiṇī
kanyaiva kulaṭā sā syād eṣa eva viniścayaḥ// 22

Indeed, the young girl, whose index toe extends far beyond [var: is connected with]¹⁵ the big toe [when she walks], is a slut.

Bhaviṣyapurāṇa, 1.28.20, metre: *anuṣṭubh*

pāde pradeśinī yasyā aṅguṣṭhaṃ samatikramet/
duḥśīlā durbhagā jñeyā kanyāṃ tām parivarjayet// 20

She, whose index toe should surpass the big toe [when she walks], should be considered as an ill-tempered girl who misbehaves. One should abandon the young girl.

Sāmudrikaśāstra

Sāmudrikatilaka, 4.23–26, metre: *āryā*
yāntyāṃ niyataṃ yasyā na spr̥ṣati kaniṣṭhikāṅgulī bhūmim/
sā hatvā patim ādyaṃ raho ramate dvitīyena// 23

She, whose little toe never touches the ground when she walks, after having killed her first master, secretly sports with a second.

spr̥ṣati na yasyā bhūtaḥ anāmikā sā patidvayaṃ hanti/
atihīnāyāṃ tasyāṃ nityaṃ kalahapriyā sā ca// 24

She, whose ring toe does not touch the surface of the earth [when she walks], kills her first and second masters and is always quarrelsome when the [toe] is very short.

hīnā madhyā yasyāḥ sā yoṣit pauruṣaṃ karoti sadā/
apṛṣṭāyāṃ tasyāṃ mārayati punaḥ patitritayam// 25

The woman, whose middle toe is short, always acts manly. On the other hand, when it is untouched [by the ground when she walks], she kills her first, second, and third masters.

¹⁵ Translation of the variant follows the commentary: aṅguṣṭhāvyatirekiṇī=aṅguṣṭhena sambaddhā.

anṡuṡṡhād adhikā syād asyāḥ pādapradeśinī niyatam/
sā bhavati duścaritrā kanyaiva ca ko 'tra saṡdehaḥ// 26

And finally, the young girl, whose index toe should always exceed the big toe [when she walks], will become a woman who misbehaves. In this matter, what is the doubt?

The passages in both examples of physiognomy indicate that the *anuṡṡubh*-verses preserved in the Purāṇas probably served as the principal sources for subsequent compilations of physiognomy in verses of different metres. In the first example, the *anuṡṡubh*-verses from the *Bhaviṡyapurāṇa*, and the *Gargasamhitā* served as the sources for the *āryā*-verse from the *Bṛhatsamhitā*; and the *anuṡṡubh*-verse of *Skandapurāṇa*'s Kāśikhaṇḍa stood behind the *āryā*-verse from the *Sāṡudrikatilaka*. In the second example, the *anuṡṡubh*-verse from the *Garuḍapurāṇa* was the basis of the *upendravajrā*-verse in the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, while the *anuṡṡubh*-verse; Kāśikhaṇḍa of the *Skandapurāṇa* and from the *Bhaviṡyapurāṇa* were the sources of the *āryā*-verse in the *Sāṡudrikatilaka*. In this way, a process of assimilation appears to have taken place, whereby older material preserved in a simple metre was reformulated in slightly more complicated metres, resulting ultimately in an independent textbook of physiognomy.

The Ideological Basis of Indian Physiognomy

Fortune-telling by women's toes also provides insight into the ideology that lay behind Indian physiognomy. The basic principle was simple: uniformity was auspicious and irregularity was inauspicious. The rule applied primarily to physical appearance, but also a system of numerology was present. Each of the five toes, from the little toe to the big toe, reflected a certain quality, so that the degree of the result based on them was expressed in terms of the ordinal numbers to give first, second, and third degrees.

These verses not only provide an understanding of the principles of Indian physiognomy, they also reflect a dominant attitude towards women. It is clear that women were looked upon with a good deal of mistrust, suspicion, and even fear, which could be the reasons that they were relegated to an inferior position in society. Their sole role was faithfully to serve their master(s) and provide him (them)

with healthy male offspring. Should a young girl show any signs to the contrary, she was immediately rejected.

In addition to being one of the only parts of a female's anatomy on which a man could cast his eyes with impunity, the feet were (and still are) considered by most Indians to be one of the most sensitive and expressive of parts of the body. Veneration by touching, kissing and washing the feet has always been part of Hinduism, as well as Buddhism. The toes of the foot reflected harmony and balance in the individual. As noticed from representations of the Buddha's footprint, all toes were to be of even height, so that no single toe extended beyond another. This symbolised the Buddha's universal harmony and balance. It is interesting to point out here that this ideal image of the toes differs from that commonly understood in the West, where the perfect foot has toes, which decrease in even proportion from the big toe to the little toe. Any variation in the ideal paradigm indicated a defilement of character and foretold an unfortunate outcome.

Conclusions

We have reviewed the literary history of the art of fortune-telling by the body in ancient and mediaeval India. We have focused on the texts that preserved and transmitted the knowledge in brahmanic circles. The Sanskrit literature of Indian physiognomy seems to reveal an important process in India's literary history. Independent Sanskrit literary traditions often may have evolved by means of assimilating and recasting information that sometimes derived from the common store of folklore. Knowing where and how to find it in the vast sea of Indic literature can provide an access that will lead to a more complete understanding of the history and culture in ancient and mediaeval India.

Finally, since this is still a preliminary study, much more research and exploration are required to gain a proper understanding of the subject. Therefore, I would like to suggest four possible topics of further examination:

- 1) A detailed and critical study of the early sources of physiognomy in the Purāṇas and early compilations of Jyotiḥśāstra with an eye to explaining the history and evolution of Indian physiognomy in ancient and mediaeval India.

- 2) Text-critical editions and translations of the numerous manuscripts of physiognomy located in north and south India.
- 3) Comparative studies with other systems of physiognomy preserved in both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages.
- 4) A detail study of the folklore of fortune telling among the Gypsies or Romany, whose unique language seems to have had its origins in Indian languages. Especially interesting here would be to try to find out if there might be connections between physiognomic traditions of the Indians and those of the Gypsies.

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GERALD JAMES LARSON, THE TEACHER: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

James McNamara

‘Yoga means union’

What’s that? ‘Yoga means union’? Did I really just hear that phrase in Gerald James Larson’s *Yoga Traditions of India* course, circa 1977? Larson, who so tenaciously and strenuously battled against the then-popular notions of what yoga was all about, and who stressed that the philosophical underpinnings of this ancient tradition rested instead upon a radical *dis*-union? Yet during a meeting of the class, there was Ram Dass on the movie screen, big as life, proclaiming the more popular view to Larson’s students that ‘yoga’ is fundamentally focussed upon the ‘union’ of the human and the divine.

I take this as a telling example of an aspect of Gerald Larson’s career that, for me, shines as brightly as do his accomplishments in research and writing: Larson as the teacher par excellence, superbly skilled and supremely dedicated to the highest ideals of pedagogy. It is an aspect that deeply touched and impressed all of us who were privileged to work closely with him through the decades, and one that influenced each of us in our own careers in a myriad of ways. He is a true master of *upāya kauśalya*, the ‘skill in means’ proclaimed and displayed by Buddhist ‘yoga’ teachers who so artfully pitch their message at the level appropriate to the particular audience with which they are then interacting. Larson knows that truly effective teaching is not soliloquy; the lesson must be understood for real learning to have taken place.

Larson’s explication of the philosophical basis of yoga was, for many students, one of their first opportunities to engage rigorously with a tradition of thought quite foreign to their own, and quite challenging to grasp in its subtlety and complexity. After setting the context with a brief but comprehensive overview of the historical background out of which the great schools of Indian philosophy emerged, Larson would lead his students on an intriguing journey through Sāṃkhya-Yoga. That flight of the mind culminated in his

spellbinding descriptions of the levels of trance states that were the goal of the skilled yogin, wherein the worthy one experienced for the first time the pure state of the *puruṣa* spirit, unsullied now by the (apparent) submersion in the *prakṛti* world of mental and physical form. The true nature of these two principles was finally understood, and they were seen to be wholly and radically separate from each other—the very antithesis of ‘union’.

But, satisfying as it must have been for him to have thus introduced the students to the ‘real’ yoga, Larson was a conscientious-enough teacher to want to ensure that his charges would be able to understand that essential depiction within the broader context of the myriad forms that yoga had assumed through the centuries. Thus when the course syllabus got round to an explication of *bhakti*-yoga, the stress on ‘yoga as union’ could not be avoided, and Larson would show the film of the popular psychology-professor-turned-guru, Ram Dass, uttering those words about ‘union’ which, I always imagined, had Larson gritting his teeth.

This diligence in his teaching was an illuminating reflection of Larson the scholar and Larson the person: in a manner curiously reflective of the basic Sāṃkhya critique of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, Larson is able to hold apparent opposites together in a creative, energizing tension. He is at once both meticulous in detail, yet wonderfully creative in spirit. He is a man of great intellectual and personal passion, but it is a disciplined, restrained (‘yoked’) passion, always in focus, always in balance. His passion for his work and for the life of the mind, his passionate devotion to his family, and as is the focus herein, the passionate dedication to giving his students his best efforts in guiding their education: these mark Gerald James Larson as a most impressive role model for students and colleagues alike.

As one of a small group who were Larson’s first batch of doctoral students, and as someone who served as his teaching and research assistant, I was fortunate to be able to watch Larson grow in stature and in status, even as he guided us along as we started our own professional careers. He was, at the same time, a demanding taskmaster and a gifted teacher. When pneumonia derailed my first-year Sanskrit studies, Larson determined that I must nevertheless join the second-year group in the following year as planned; his solution to my missing year was to tutor me weekly by compressing the first year into ten weeks of intensive catch-up. When a very exciting ‘Karma Conference’ was planned for a select group of senior

scholars, he thought it a valuable enough opportunity for this callow graduate student that he invited me to sleep on the floor of his hotel room, and somehow managed to allow me to attend the proceedings as an observer. Those of us who studied under Gerald Larson could go on and on with such stories of how his dedication as a teacher benefited our lives and careers, but suffice to say that we could not have wished for a more skilled and generous a mentor.

From his practice of starting each day with translation work on various Sanskrit *śloka*-s, we learned the importance of regular and disciplined exercise to maintain and sharpen our skills. From his groundbreaking original work on Sāṃkhya and the later amplifications and analyses of the multiple strands of that tradition, culminating in the definitive Sāṃkhya encyclopaedia, we learned the value of firmly grounding oneself in great depth in a particular area of expertise. And from his excursions far beyond his primary fields of Indian philosophy into the realms of comparative philosophy, art, law, and his unforgettable Sartre seminars, we learned to value great breadth in learning and scholarship.

I was reminded of all of this during Gerald Larson's visit to the University of Cape Town in the early 1990s, during the tense and uncertain days of South Africa's teetering on the precipice of civil war. His presence here for those brief days reminded me so clearly of the many skills and lessons that we each took away from our years of working with Larson, of what it takes to achieve real and sustained excellence in one's field, and of the tremendous influence that a truly gifted teacher can have on the lives of those fortunate enough to have studied under him. I am sure that I speak for my many such colleagues when I end this brief personal reflection with a heartfelt expression of gratitude to Gerald James Larson, the Teacher.

GERALD JAMES LARSON:
APPOINTMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Professional Appointments

Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (1967–68)
Post-Doctoral Research Scholar, College of Indology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India (1968–69)
Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (1969–70)
Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (1970–72)
Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (1972–1995)
Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Indian Cultures and Civilizations, and Director, India Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington (1995–2003)
Honorary Visiting Professor, Department of Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India (1976–77)
Honorary Visiting Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Lancaster, Lancaster, England (spring 1983)
Interim (founding) Director, Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, University of California, Santa Barbara (1987–88)
Director, India Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington (1995–2003)
Rabindranath Tagore Professor Emeritus, Indiana University, Bloomington (2003–present)
Professor Emeritus, Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (1995–present)

List of Publications

1. 1968 Review of Eliade's *From Primitives to Zen* *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XXIV, No. 2, Winter 1968, 208–209

2. 1968 Review of F. J. Streng's *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XXIV, No. 2, *Emptiness* Winter 1968, 209–210 Review
3. 1968 Review of J. J. Bachofen's *Myth, Religion and Mother Right* *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* XXIV, No. 3, Spring 1968, 298–299 Review
4. 1969 'Classical Sāṃkhya and the Phenomenological Ontology of Jean-Paul Sartre' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 1969, 45–58 Article
5. 1969 *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1969, 330 pp. Book
6. 1969 Review of J. M. Kitagawa, ed., *History of Religions* *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, Spring 1969, 187–190 Review Article
7. 1969 Review of A. K. Reischauer's *Meaning and Truth of Religion* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3, Sept. 1969, 288–292 Review
8. 1970 'Demythologization and the History of Religions' *Bharati, Bulletin of Indological Studies*, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Nos. 12–14 (1968–71), pp. 44–63 Article
9. 1970 'A New Alexandrianism' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Fall 1970, 253–255 Review Article
10. 1971 Review of Chakravarti's *Philosophical Foundations of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism* *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, April 1971, 227–228 Review
11. 1972 'The trimūrti of dharma in Indian Thought: Paradox or Contradiction' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, April 1972, 145–153 Article
12. 1973 'Mystical Man in India' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1973, 1–16 Article
13. 1973 'Revolutionary Praxis and Comparative Philosophy' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 1973, 333–341 Article
14. 1973 Coordinator for Articles on 'Philosophy and Revolution' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 1973, 283–341 Coordinator

15. 1973 'A Possible Mystical Interpretation of *ahamkāra* and the *tanmātra*-s in the Sāṃkhya' In Arabinda Basu, ed., Article
Sri Aurobindo: A Garland of Tributes, Pondicherry: Aurobindo Research Academy, 1973, 79–87
16. 1974 'The Sources for *Śakti* in Abhinavagupta's Kāshmir Śaivism' *Philosophy East and West*, Article
Vol. 24, No. 1, January 1974, 41–56
17. 1974 'Yoga' In *World Book Encyclopedia*, current edition Article
18. 1974 *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity* University of California Book
Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974, editor and contributor
19. 1974 'The Study of Mythology and Comparative Mythology' In *Myth and Indo-European Antiquity*, Article
see citation above, 1–16
20. 1974 *The Secular and Sacred in Indian Art*, co-edited by Pratapaditya Pal and Gerald J. Larson Catalog for exhibition Foreword
organized by the Dept. of Religious Studies and co-editor
and presented in the Art Galleries, UC Santa Barbara, June 26–August 25, 1974
21. 1975 'The Notion of *satkārya* in Sāṃkhya: Toward a Philosophical Reconstruction' *Philosophy East and West*, Article
Vol. 25, No. 1, January 1975, 31–40
22. 1975 Review of A. Stanford's *The Bhagavad Gītā* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Review
Vol. XLIII, No. 2, supplement June 1975, 351–352
23. 1975 Review of G. Dumezil's *From Myth to Fiction* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Review
Vol. XLIII, No. 4, December 1975, 834
24. 1975 'The *Bhagavad Gītā* as Cross-Cultural Process: Toward an Analysis of the Social Locations of a Religious Text' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Article
Vol. XLIII, No. 4, December 1975, 651–669
25. 1975 Editorial Advisor to Hajime Nakamura for his book, *Parallel Developments in Eastern and Western Thought* Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo and New York, 1975 Editorial
Advisor

26. 1976 Review of Andre Padoux's *Recherches sur la Symbolique et l'énergie de la Parole dans certains textes tantriques* *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3/4, November/December 1976, 290–291 Review
27. 1976 Review of Paul Brass' *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1, March 1976, 174 Review
28. 1976 'The Aesthetic (*rasāsvāda*) and the Religious (*brahmāsvāda*) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Śaivism' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October 1976, 371–387 Article
29. 1978 'The Aesthetic and the Religious in Hindu Spirituality: The Dance of Shiva' *Prabuddha Dharma, Vedanta Quarterly*, March 1978, 131–136 Article
30. 1978 'Modernization and Religious Legitimation in India: 1835–1885' In *Religion and the Legitimation of Power*, edited by B. Smith, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1978, 28–41 Article
31. 1978 Review of G. Koelmann's *Pātañjala Yoga* *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 1978, 236–239 Review
32. 1978 Review of L. N. Sharma's *Kashmir Śaivism* *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 1978, 239–241 Review
33. 1978 Review of Harsh Narain's *Evolution of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Categoricality* *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 28, No. 3, July 1978, 383–385 Review
34. 1978 Review of S. Basu's *Modern Indian Mysticism*, 3 volumes *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 28, No. 3, July 1978, 381–383 Review
35. 1978 'Prolegomenon to a Theory of Religion' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, December 1978, 443–463 Article
36. 1979 *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi; and Ross-Erikson Publishers, Santa Barbara (Second revised edition) (new material = pp. 63–70, 209–247, 255–291) Book

37. 1980 'Karma as a "Sociology of Knowledge" or "Social Psychology" of Process/Praxis' In *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, edited by Wendy D. O'Flaherty, University of California Press, 303–316 Article
38. 1980 *In Her Image: The Great Goddess in Indian Asia and the Madonna in Christian Culture* (co-authored with P. Pal and R. Gowen) Regents of the Univ. of California, the National Endowment for the Arts and the UCSB Art Museum Art Catalog (editor)
39. 1980 'Introduction: The Symbolism of the "Motherhood of God" in Indic and Christian Culture' Introductory essay to the exhibition catalog, cited above Article
40. 1980 'The Format of Technical Philosophical Writing in Ancient India: Inadequacies of Conventional Translations' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 30, No. 3, July 1980, 375–380 Article
41. 1981 Article entries: 'Ahaṃkāra,' 'Āsana,' 'Dhyāna,' 'Guṇa,' 'Haṭha Yoga,' 'Īśvara,' 'Patañjali,' 'Prakṛti,' 'Prāṇāyāma,' 'Puruṣa,' 'Sāṃkhya' and 'Yoga' *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, K. Crim, editor, L. D. Shinn and R. A. Bullard, assoc. eds., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981 (pp. 14, 64–65, 222–223, 286, 296, 367, 561, 575, 589, 648–650, 813–817) Dictionary Articles
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50. 1986 'Interpreting Across Boundaries: Some Preliminary Reflections' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 36, No. 2, April 1986, 131–142 Article
51. 1987 'Conceptual Resources in South Asia for "Environmental Ethics" (or The Fly is Still Alive and Well in the Bottle)' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, No. 2, April 1987, 150–159 Article
52. 1987 'Āyurveda and the Hindu Philosophical Systems' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (July 1987), 245–259 Article
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56. 1988 'Introduction: The "Age-Old Distinction between the Same and the Other"' In *Interpreting Across Boundaries*, see citation above, pp. 3–18 Article
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58. 1988 'An Introduction to the Santa Barbara Colloquy: Some Unresolved Questions' Special issue of *Soundings*, see citation above, pp. 187–204 Article
59. 1988 'Revising Graduate Education' Appendix to special issue of *Soundings*, see citation above, 415–420 Article (working paper for the Santa Barbara Colloquy)
60. 1989 'Some Notes on Religion and Politics in Contemporary India' *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 79–87 February 1989, Delhi, India Article
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62. 1989 'An Old Problem Revisited: The Relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism' *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, Volume 15, fall 1989, Hamburg, Germany, 129–146 Article
63. 1990 'Reason in Early Indian Philosophy' *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Institute* Article

64. 1990 'Matter and Consciousness in Early Indian Philosophy' *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Institute of Culture*, Vol. XLI, Nos. 8 and 9, 1990, 172–174, 206–210 Article
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66. 1990 'Contra Pluralism' *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. LXXIII, Nos. 2–3, Summer/Fall 1990, 303–326 Article
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68. 1990 Review of Moin Shakir, ed., *Religion, State and Politics in India* *South Asia in Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, October 1990, 24–25 Review
69. 1991 Review of T. S. Rukmani's four-volume translation of *Yogavārttika of Vijnānabhikṣu* *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 19, 219–225, 1991 Review
70. 1992 'K. C. Bhattacharya and the Plurality of Puruṣa-s (*puruṣabahutva*) in Sāṃkhya' *Journal of the Indian Council for Philosophical Research*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1992: 93–104 Article
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74. 1993 'Discourse about "Religion" in Colonial and Postcolonial India' In N. Smart and S. Thakur, eds., *Dilemmas of Modern India*, London: Macmillan, 1993, pp. 181–193 Article
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76. 1993 'Āyurveda and the Hindu Philosophical Systems' In T. P. Kasulis, R. T. Ames and W. Dissanayake, eds., *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*. SUNY Press, 1993, pp. 103–121. Article (Reprint)
77. 1994 'Hinduism in the World and in Today's America' In Jacob Neusner, ed., *World Religions in Today's America*, Louisville: Westminster and John Knox Press, 1994, pp. 177–202 Chapter
78. 1994 'Is South Asian *yoga* "Philosophy," "Religion," Both or Neither?' In U. Bianchi, et al., eds., *Proceedings of the XVIth Congress of the International Assn. of the History of Religions*, Rome, 1990. 'L'ERMA' di BRETSCHNEIDER, pp. 261–270 Article
79. 1994 'Are Jains Really Hindus? Some Parallels and Differences between Jain and Hindu Philosophies' *The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India*. Edited by Pratapaditya Pal. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994, pp. 57–61 Article
80. 1995 *India's Agony Over Religion* State University of New York Press, 1995, 393 pp. Book

81. 1995 'Religion in Modern India: Searching for a New Beginning, Parts I and II' *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, Volume XLVI No. 8 and No. 9, August and September 1995, 309–319 and 365–372. Articles
82. 1995 'Classical Yoga Philosophy and Some Issues in the Philosophy of Mind' *Religious Studies*, Volumes 13–14, No. 1, April 1995, 36–51 Article
83. 1996 'Religions, People and Peanuts: A Response to Raimon Panikkar' *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume LXXIX, Nos. 1–2, Spring/Summer 1996, 193–196 Article
84. 1996 'India's Agony Over Religion' in *The Sum of Our Choices*, edited by Arvind Sharma, Volume 4, McGill Studies in Religion, Essays in Honor of Eric J. Sharpe, Scholars Press, 1996, pp. 193–211 Article
85. 1996 'India's Waking to Life and Freedom in the Midnight of a Thousand Suns' *Occasional Paper Series*, No. 1, India Studies Program, Indiana University Office of Publications, Tagore Inaugural Lecture, 17 pp. Article
86. 1996 'Contra Pluralism' in *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, edited by Joseph Prabhu, essays in honor of Raimon Panikkar, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1996, pp. 71–87 Article (reprint of item 66 above)
87. 1997 Review of P. Bilimoria's *Śabdapramāṇa: Word and Knowledge* in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 47, No. 1, January 1997, 84–86 Review
88. 1997 Review of K. Mishra's *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 47, No. 2, April 1997, 259–263 Review

89. 1997 Review of S. N. Balagangadhara's *The Heathen in His Blindness* in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 47, No. 3, July 1997, 433–435 Review
90. 1997 FOREWORD to *Meditation Revolution*, edited by Douglas Renfrew Brooks and Paul Muller-Ortega, South Fallsburg, New York: Agama Press, 1997, pp. xiii–xv. Foreword
91. 1997 'Indian Conceptions of Reality and Divinity,' in *A Companion to World Philosophies*, edited by E. Deutsch and R. Bontekoe. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997, pp. 248–258 Article
92. 1997 'India's Contribution to World Philosophy' in *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Institute of Culture*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 12, December 1997, pp. 555–564 Article
93. 1997 'Polymorphic Sexuality, Homoeroticism and the Study of Religion' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 65, No. 3, Fall 1997, 655–665 Review Article
94. 1997 *Changing Myths and Images: Twentieth Century Popular Art in India* Indiana University Art Museum and the Indiana University India Studies Program Art Catalogue, co-edited with P. Pal
95. 1997 'A Postmodernist Perspective on India's Popular Art' in *Changing Myths and Images: Twentieth-Century Popular Art in India* see citation above Article
96. 1997 *India's Agony Over Religion* Oxford University Press, Delhi Book Edition of 1995 SUNY book)
97. 1997 Review of V. Dalmia and H. von Stietencron's *Representing Hinduism* in *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, August 1997, 424–425 Review
98. 1997 Review of Sudhir Kakar's *The Colors of Violence* in *Religious Studies Review*, January 1997, 96 Short Review

99. 1998 Review of W. H. McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* in *Religious Studies Review*, January 1998, 122 Short Review
100. 1998 Review of T. V. Sathyamurthy, ed., *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India* in *American Journal of Sociology*, March 1998, 1417–1419 Review
101. 1998 'Indian Philosophy: Its Relevance Today' *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, Vol. XLIX, No. 7, July 1998, pp. 310–317 Article
102. 1998 *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, new hard cover and paperback reprint of Second Revised Edition, 1998 Book (reprint)
103. 1998 'Polymorphic Sexuality, Homoeroticism, and the Study of Religion Revisited: A Rejoinder' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 66, No. 3, 637–639 Rejoinder Article
104. 1998 Review of Harsha V. Dehejia's *Pārvatīdarpaṇa: An Exposition of Kāśmīr Śaivism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997) in *Marg* (Journal for the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, India), December, 1998, pp. 118–119 Review
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109. 1999 Review of L. S. Rouner, ed., *The Longing for Home*. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996 *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 79, No. 2, April 1999, pp. 336–337 Review
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111. 1999 'A Dangerous Time for India' in *The Global Connection*, Volume 6, Issue 4, pp. 14–15 Article
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113. 1999 Review of Ian Whicher's *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, SUNY Press 1998 in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Volume 3, No. 2, August 1999, 183–186 Review
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116. 2000 ‘The Role of Indian Philosophy in the Next Millennium’ in *Bulletin* of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Vol. LI, December 2000, 543–551 Article
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CONTRIBUTORS

RICHA PAURANIK CLEMENTS is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University. She researches rhetorical uses of religious symbols in literature and visual arts in order to understand cultural evolution through globalisations and creolisation. Her focus is on Indian religions, especially Hinduism and Islam.

CRAIG DAVIS earned a dual Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and in Religious Studies from Indiana University. He currently serves as an International Education Program Specialist for the Bureau of International Labor Affairs at the U.S. Department of Labor. Aside from his passion of studying medieval Islamic culture in South Asia, Craig also conducts research on the modern Muslim world. His most recent project examines employment strategies designed to mitigate violence in the Middle East, using Iraq as a case study. He lives in Maryland with his wife Mirna and their four children.

WADE DAZEY is an Associate Professor in Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater. He is currently the co-ordinator for the general humanities core course, 'The World of Ideas,' has been active in promoting international education on his campus, and serves as co-ordinator for student exchanges with Japan and Switzerland. His research interests include Hinduism, Buddhism, the comparative study of monasticism, religion and conflict, and the role of religion in identity formation.

NANDINI IYER was born in India, where she was first educated, graduating from the University of Bombay in Economics and Philosophy. She then went to Oxford University, where she graduated with First Class Honours in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, specialising in Philosophy; she also gained her M.A. degree at Oxford. After teaching Philosophy at the University of Delhi for a year, she returned to Oxford and taught Philosophy there for several years. Since 1965 she has been teaching at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she was first an Asst. Professor in the Philosophy Department

for several years, and in 1973 moved to the Department of Religious Studies. She is now an Emeritus Faculty member at UCSB. She has lectured and presented papers on philosophy and religion at conferences and academic and other institutions both in the U.S. and abroad. She is co-editor of, and has annotated, *The Descent of the Gods: The Mystical Writings of George William Russell* (Colin Smythe, U.K.).

KNUT A. JACOBSEN is Professor in the Department of the History of Religions, University of Bergen, Norway. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religious thought, pilgrimage and popular forms of worship in India, and Hinduism in Diaspora. He is the author *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999; Indian edition: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002), the forthcoming *Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal), many articles and book chapters, and several books on Hinduism and Buddhism published in Norwegian. He is the editor (with P. Pratap Kumar) of *South Asians in the Diaspora* (Brill, 2004).

P. PRATAP KUMAR received a Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is Professor of Hinduism and Eastern Religions at the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. His earlier publications include *The Goddess Lakṣmī* (Scholars Press, 1997), *Hindus in South Africa* (University of Durban-Westville, 2000). He also jointly edited with Knut A. Jacobsen the volume on *South Asians in the Diaspora* (Brill, 2004).

RAMDAS LAMB is an Associate Professor of Religion at the University of Hawaii. He has been studying Indian religious traditions for more than 35 years, first as a sādhu in the Rāmānanda Saṃpradāy in North India for nearly ten years, then in academia. The subjects of his current research include monasticism and low caste religious movements. He is also working on a documentary film on the Rāmnāmī Sāmāj, an Untouchable Rām bhakti group in Central India (www.ramnam.net).

JEFFREY S. LIDKE is Assistant Professor of World Religions in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Berry College where he

also serves as the Chair of the Interfaith Council. Dr. Lidke studied Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy under Gerald James Larson at the University of California, Santa Barbara from 1991 until 1996. Lidke's doctoral dissertation (2001), 'The Goddess Within and Beyond the Three Cities: Śākta Tantra and the Paradox of Power in Nepāla-Maṇḍala,' is based on field research in the Kathmandu Valley and original translations of the ninth-century Āgama, *Nityāśoḍaṣikarṇava*. His current research is focused on the influence of Tantric traditions on Balinese culture and society.

PATRICK MAHAFFEY is the chair of the doctoral program in Mythological Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, California, an interdisciplinary humanities program with an emphasis in depth psychology. He teaches courses on Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and has published essays on religious pluralism, postmodernism, and religion in America.

JAMES MCNAMARA. Following the award of his doctorate at University of California, Santa Barbara, James McNamara remained at that institution in a variety of teaching and institutional advancement roles. In 1990, he accepted what was supposed to be a two-year visiting professorship in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Fifteen years later, he remains at that university, now as head of the academic administration and as project manager for information systems implementations, doing a bit of religious studies teaching ('to stay sane') when he can.

PAUL E. MULLER-ORTEGA is Professor of Religion at the University of Rochester where he teaches undergraduate courses in South Asian religions and languages. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara (1985). He is the author of *The Triadic Heart of Shiva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Śaivism of Kashmir* (SUNY, 1989), and a co-author of *Meditation Revolution: A History and Theology of the Siddha Yoga Lineage* (Agama Press, 1997), as well as a number of articles on topics in the study of the Śaivism of Kashmir. His scholarly preoccupations and existential agendas persistently bifurcate between the 'immersed' exploration of Hindu Tantric meditation practices and methods, and the 'distanced,' interpretive approaches to the intellectual ideologies that render the results of such practices and methods. He is currently engaged in the writing

of two books that will reflect these two approaches to the Hindu Tantra. One deals with religious encounters with the Hindu deity Śiva and is entitled, *Liṅga Pilgrimage: Meditations on Śiva as Consciousness*. The other will be a collection of interpretive essays derived from a close reading of Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* and is to be called *Yoginī Born: Tantrāloka Studies and Reflections on the Hindu Tantra*.

PRATAPADITYA PAL is an internationally renowned historian of South Asian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian art. Among his 60 + publications, two—*In Her Image* (1980) and *Changing Myths and Images* (1997)—were co-authored with Gerald James Larson.

LLOYD W. PFLUEGER is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Truman State University, in Kirksville Missouri, where he has taught for the last 11 years. He studied with Gerald Larson at the University of California, Santa Barbara from 1981–90 and wrote his dissertation on 'God, Consciousness, and Meditation: The Concept of Īśvara in the *Yogasūtra*.' He is currently working on a monograph of the *Śrīviṣṇusahasranāmastotra*, *The Thousand Names of the All-pervasive Being*. He lives on a small lake in the woods with his dog, Rossko.

TRACY PINTCHMAN holds a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California in Santa Barbara (1992). She specialises in the study of Hinduism, with a focus on gender issues, Goddess traditions, and Hindu women's rituals. Her publication include several articles and book chapters as well as two monographs and one edited book, all published by SUNY Press: *The Rise of the Goddess in the Hindu Tradition* (1994); *Seeking Mahādevī: Constructing the Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess* (2001); and *Guests at God's Wedding: Celebrating Kartik among the Women of Benares* (forthcoming, 2005). She has held grants from the American Academy of Religion, American Institute of Indian Studies, and the National Endowment of the Humanities. She has also taught at Northwestern University and Harvard University, where she was a visiting scholar in the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School in 2000–2001.

ANTONIO RIGOPOULOS holds a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is Associate Professor of Indology at the Department of Euro-Asiatic Studies of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. His research has mainly focused

on the religious life of medieval and modern Maharashtra and especially on the Dattātreyā icon and the Datta-saṃpradāya: see his monograph *Dattātreyā: The Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra. A Study of the Transformative and Inclusive Character of a Multi-Faceted Hindu Deity* (SUNY Press, Albany, N.Y. 1998). He is presently working on an annotated translation of the *Guru-gītā*.

T. S. RUKMANI is currently professor and chair in Hindu Studies at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. She was the first chair in Hindu Studies and Indian Philosophy at the University of Durban Westville, South Africa. She had a distinguished academic career at the University of Delhi and is the only D.Litt of the Department of Sanskrit of that University to date and where her last assignment was Principal, Mirinda House. She is the author of eleven books which include *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu* (four vols.) and the *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa of Śaṅkara* (two vols.). She publishes regularly in academic journals both in India and abroad.

JUDY D. SALTZMAN is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo where she taught for 29 years and founded the religious studies program and minor. She received her BA with distinction from San Jose State University, and an MA in philosophy from University of California, Berkeley. She received another MA and a Ph.D. in religious studies from University of California, Santa Barbara where she was Professor Gerald Larson's teaching assistant. She was also a Junior Fellow of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions and a Fulbright Scholar at the Freie Universität Berlin. Professor Saltzman is the author of *Paul Natorp's Philosophy Of Religion Within The Marburg Neo-Kantian Tradition*, Georg Olms Verlag, 1981; and 'The Individual and the Avatāra in the Thought of Radhakrishnan,' in *New Essays in The Philosophy Of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan* (India Books Centre, 1995), and other publications.

STHANESHWAR TIMALSINA is Assistant Professor at the San Diego State University in the Department of Religious Studies. He did his masters (Acharya) from Sampurnananda University, Varanasi, India, and taught for 9 years at Mahendra Sanskrit University, Balmiki Campus, in Kathmandu, Nepal, as a lecturer of Tantric Studies. March 2005 he defended his dissertation 'Seeing and Appearance: A Study of the

Advaita Doctrine of *Dr̥ṣṭiṣṭivāda* at Martin Luther University, Halle, Germany. He taught for a year as a lecturer at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has taught 3 years at Washington University in St. Louis as a lecturer of Hindi, Sanskrit, and South Asian Literature.

KENNETH G. ZYSK is associate professor and head of the department of Indology at Copenhagen University. He received his D.Phil. from the University of Oslo and Ph.D. from the Australian National University. He has been an Indian Council for Cultural Relations Distinguished Visitor to India, a Senior Fulbright Fellow to India, American Institute for Indian Studies Fellow, and a Wellcome Fellow in the History of Medicine in London, and has served as Director of Dharam Hinduja Center's Indic Traditions of Healthcare project at Columbia University and taught at New York University. In addition to having written the books *Religious healing in the Veda* (1985), *Asceticism and healing in ancient India* (1991) and *Conjugal Love in India* (2002) and numerous articles on the themes pertaining to divination in India and the history and practice of Indian medicine and Ayurveda, both inside and outside of India, he has served as consultant on several projects on alternative or complementary medicine and is co-editor of a series on *Traditional Indian Medicine* with Motilal Banarsidass, of the *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, and managing editor of the *Critical Pali Dictionary*.

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